The Middlebury Campus

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Special Collections celebrates 25th anniversary of marriage equality in Vermont

By RYAN McELROY
Editor in Chief

In honor of the 25th anniversary of marriage equality in Vermont, Special Collections hosted a panel of speakers and an open house related to its archive of the Vermont Freedom to Marry task force. Over 75 community members and Middlebury students gathered in the lower level of Davis Family Library on April 28 to celebrate the victory for civil rights and to reflect on what it took to succeed.

Four of the original plaintiffs in Baker v. State spoke at the panel, providing firsthand perspectives on the landmark Vermont Supreme Court case that ordered the legislature to guarantee equal protections in marriage to same-sex couples.

"When the lawsuit was filed in Ripton County, where Peter and I lived, we were informed that they were looking for a male couple because they had two female couples already. And we realized that we needed to do that," said Stan Baker, a former clinician and plaintiff in the Vermont Freedom to Marry lawsuit.

Baker is now married to his husband Peter Harrigan,

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COLLEGE ALTERS COMMENCEMENT SPEECH SELECTION PROCESS FOLLOWING CONTROVERSIES

COURTESY PHOTO / TODD BALFOUR

Lasts year's Commencement ceremony on McCullough lawn featured a student speaker chosen by her peers. This year, the college chose B Striker '25 to give the speech due to his role as SGA president.

By MAGGIE BRYAN
Senior News Editor

As the May 25 commencement ceremony quickly approaches, the college has quietly altered the selection process for the student speaker. Student Government Association (SGA) President Brandon Striker '25, known as B Striker, will be the only student speaker at commencement, marking a departure from the college's tradition of allowing a student committee to choose a speaker from the pool of candidates.

For previous commencements, the college accepted video and written submissions from student speaker candidates, which were then reviewed by a committee of their peers. However, this year, the college did not solicit speech proposals from the senior class, choosing Striker as speaker solely for his SGA presidential role.

This change in procedure follows two commencements — the class of 2024.5 graduation in February and the class of 2024 graduation last May — in which the chosen student speaker deviated from their pre-approved script to denounce the college's alleged investments in the war in Gaza.

Vice President for Student Affairs Smita Ruzicka confirmed that the administration changed the selection processes for this commencement as a direct result of those previous speeches.

"We took a different approach this year, to primarily address concerns from our community regarding the most recent Feb Celebration and last May's Commencement student speakers...

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APPLICATIONS DROP TO FIVE-YEAR LOW AS ACCEPTANCE RATE INCREASES

By HUGO ZHANG
News Editor

The college announced on May 1 that it had received 11,831 applications for the class of 2029 and 2029.5, a six percent drop from last year's 12,540. Meanwhile, the overall acceptance rate increased to 13.9% from last year's 12%.

In the Regular Decision round this spring, the college admitted 1,136 students, adding onto the 519 students who were accepted through binding programs including Early Decision I and II, QuestBridge, The Posse Foundation and College Track. This marked a record large admitted class of 1,655 admitted students, compared with last year's 1,500. The number of students who were admitted from the binding programs maintained a similar record as the classes of 2027 and 2027.5.

The college expects to welcome 640 new students this September and 115 Febs in early 2026. These figures are higher than Middlebury's normal enrollment pattern of 600 additions in September, followed by 100 Febs. By increasing the size of incoming first year classes, the college has said it hopes to generate revenue to escape its $14.1 million deficit

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TRUMP ADMINISTRATION COMPLICATES JOB SEARCH FOR STUDENTS, GRADUATES

MAGGIE BRYAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Middlebury seniors have struggled more than usual this year to secure jobs amid federal budget cuts.

By MAGGIE BRYAN & ROSELLA GRAHAM
Senior News Editor & News Editor

April 30 marked 100 days since President Trump took office, and in that time, uncertainty surrounding visas, research grant funding and key employment sectors has affected job prospects for Middlebury seniors and recent graduates. Students looking to work in industries or government programs targeted by the Trump administration feel unnerved by funding cuts and sweeping executive orders that may affect their post-grad options.

Grace Mumford '25 has interned with Terraset, a carbon dioxide removal non-profit this school year, where she hopes to continue working full-time upon graduating. After hearing rumors from her boss about an executive order potentially terminating the nonprofit status of climate-related organizations, she felt worried.

"It was really terrifying in that I just felt like I had nowhere to go, and I had put a lot of my eggs

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CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT REBRANDS WITH NEW NAME, COURSE OFFERINGS

McCardell Bicentennial Hall

PHOEBE AN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

BiHall, where chemistry classes and labs are held. Chemistry students will now have more flexibility in course offerings and major tracks.

By LUKE POWER
News Editor

This semester, the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry has been overhauled to increase student flexibility, expand course offerings and broaden its academic scope.

Now known as the Department of Chemistry, the reorganized program has changed the introductory general chemistry courses, eliminated the biochemistry major for future students, updated student labs and added a new major track. Students will also now be able to minor in chemistry as well.

Chemistry Department Chair Molly Costanza-Robinson said the new name and other reforms reflect the program's interdisciplinary approach to the major.

"The change was intended to recognize that the field of chemistry is a broad interdisciplinary field under which biochemistry and the other four traditionally defined subfields fall (organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry, analytical chemistry, and physical chemistry). We felt that isolating biochemistry as separate from the other fields of chemistry did not reflect the actual practice of chemistry," she wrote in an email to The Campus.

Students who matriculated before fall 2025 will still be able to pursue majors in chemistry or biochemistry, and they can still obtain departmental honors under the old system. Under the new system, chemistry honors will be changed as well.

Prin Chantarangkul '27, a member of the Chemistry Student Advisory Committee, explained that the honors major will now become the ACS-Chemistry major. The American Chemistry Society (ACS) is a national organization that offers certification for certain chemistry majors at select colleges and universities to set a standard for chemistry majors in higher education.

"The ACS-CHEM major is more similar to chemistry majors at larger state schools. Most B.S. Chemistry degrees at larger schools are also ACS-certified. This helps to show PHD/master's programs that our Chemistry major is of equal caliber," Chantarangkul wrote in an email to The Campus.

In order to complete an ACS-CHEM major, students

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LOCAL

Your guide to Vermont summer activities

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN & MANDY BERGHELA

Vermont Cookie Love to open new location on Main Street

By ARIELLA FROMMER

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OPINIONS

Hey Middlebury... your classism is showing

By CAITLIN HARDER

Regalia and resolve: Holding space for the sacred at Commencement

By JONATHAN ISHAM

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EDITORIAL

ChatGPT is not your friend

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The future of academia has been called into question in the past several years with the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Perhaps nowhere is this concern more pressing than...

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ARTS & CULTURE

The psychological toll of "The Walls"

By YOUYOU ZHANG

Two walls, a chair and a bed tucked into the Seeler Studio Theatre in the Mahaney Arts Center introduced audience members to the suffocating world of "The Walls" this past weekend. The play...

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SPORTS

Tennis teams capture NESCAC championships

By TING CUI

Women's lacrosse looks to NCAA championship after loss at NESCACs

By RYAN McELROY

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CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT REBRANDS ITSELF WITH NEW NAME, COURSE OFFERINGS

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must take a class in all five of the chemistry subfields: Biochemistry, organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry, analytical chemistry and physical chemistry. Regular chemistry majors must now take a class in four out of five subfields, an increase from the three that were previously required.

"Now, after students complete general chemistry, they will have five 200-level courses to choose among, which is pretty amazing! Completing each 200-level 'unlocks' more advanced courses in that area of chemistry... So, some of the changes add choice and some simply add scheduling flexibility," Robinson explained.

Those 200-level courses will now include material that was previously covered in general chemistry, as part of an effort to simplify the major's introductory course, Robinson added.

"Keeping general chemistry general means that we've pared down the topics with the goal of students being able to learn in a more measured way and be able to appreciate how the chemistry they are learning is important and powerful, regardless of whether they intend to major in chemistry, biology, neuroscience, or even outside the sciences," she wrote.

Some students told The Campus that they hope the changes will make the workload more bearable for chemistry majors.

"Apart from specialization and opportunity in contact within the classes that they're offering, it's also shortening the amount of information in each class because right now chemistry classes are super compact, which is why the major has had a reputation for being hard," Dani Pham '28 said.

Robinson also said that changes to lab structures will replace previous decades-old "superlabs" that met for nine hours a week.

"Other goals included to guide students in developing more diverse laboratory skill sets via a bunch of courses each with a single lab per week," Robinson wrote. "Nine hours per week for one course credit was a bit much, as students are not shy to tell you!"

The new 200-level courses are also intended to allow students to explore critical chemistry concepts in depth, as opposed to the quick overview they previously received in general chemistry.

"Take electrochemistry, as an example — It is traditionally covered in general chemistry but without the time to convey how important and powerful it is, how it can be used in really cool contexts and applications. This type of more specialized material will be moved to more specialized mid-level courses where there is space to cover it in more depth," Robinson explained.

Further changes include the addition of labs to theoretical classes like "Quantum Chemistry" and "Thermodynamics and Kinetics" as well as a renewed effort to help students develop laboratory skills and familiarity.

The changes were part of a decade-long deliberative process that sought to align the Middlebury chemistry department and major with that of peer institutions, according to Robinson.

Editor's Note: News Editor Hugo Zhang '28 contributed reporting to this article.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN VERMONT

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who attended the panel along with two of the other original plaintiffs, Holly Puterbaugh and Lois Farnham. They cited a workshop they attended held by former attorneys Beth Robinson and Susan Murray, who were also panelists, as inspiration for joining the lawsuit.

"On the way home, I don't know which of us said first, 'I think I want to get involved in this Freedom to Marry task force,' but the other one said 'Good, because I want to do it too,'' Puterbaugh explained.

"Believe it or not, a couple of younger folks said we were their role models and we should do something like this," Farnham said. The pair has been together for 52 years since meeting at the University of Vermont in the 1970s.

In 2009, after another statewide push and campaign at the Vermont legislature, the state passed full marriage equality.

The journey to get there was not an easy one. Every panelist shared examples of their worst memories from the fight for equal rights, whether it was abuse from passersby at state fairs, public scrutiny and attacks in the media, or what it might mean to fail.

Robinson, who currently sits as a federal judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, shared her hardest moment in the campaign. She told the audience her story from 2009 of having to prepare for the possibility that the governor's veto of marriage equality would not be overturned in the legislature.

"My worst moment in this entire 15-plus-year saga was Monday night, because when I went home," she explained, "I had to write the statement I would give to the press if we lost. I was crying for the whole thing."

Her best moment? Tuesday: the day the legislature overrode the veto and enshrined the right to marriage equality into Vermont law.

"We had the votes. They were shaky, but we had them," she added.

Although Special Collections officially billed the event as a panel, it turned into a reunion for many attendees. Former activists, organizers, plaintiffs and state legislators who fought side-by-side for equal rights drove hours to see each other after years apart.

"It was more of a reunion than I expected it to be. People came from hours away to attend, which I think is really cool," said Joseph Watson, the preservation manager at Special Collections who also participated in the Freedom to Marry movement. "It was great to see people that we had worked so closely together in the cause."

Seeing so many figures central to the fight for marriage equality was also impactful for younger attendees who had been just children during Baker v. Vermont and the 2009 marriage vote.

"I hadn't met them. I just sort of knew of them, so I was honestly a little bit starstruck," said Processing Archivist Anna Hurd, who organized the collection. "So it was sort of like, 'Oh my God, you're Stan Baker of Baker v. State,' but everyone was just so warm and appreciative and happy to be there."

Besides the raucous panel, the event's centerpiece was the task force's archive, which Hurd spent months collecting, organizing and making presentable for visitors and future researchers alike. Watson had a prior connection to Beth Robinson, and reached out to her to propose that Middlebury house the archives. After reviewing other potential sites, Robinson agreed that Middlebury's Special Collections would be the best choice.

Hurd and Watson first schlepped to Robinson's house, taking bin after bin of legal documents, parade banners, volunteer logs and campaign paraphernalia — even a county fair booth made the journey back to Middlebury. Hurd spent months piecing the collection together, which spanned 15 years of activism.

"Almost everything we collect, we collect to keep permanently. And it's impossible to say two generations from now what people would be interested in. There might be a great deal of interest in it," Watson explained. "But they'll have the archive to answer whatever questions they have."

VERMONT
FREEDOM TO MARRY
TASK FORCE
VERMONT FIRSTS in the Nation
Proud of Vermont
VERMONT FOR ALL VERMONTERS
PROUD of Vermont
CIVIL rights union

COURTESY PHOTO / MIKAELA TAYLOR

Over 75 people involved in the Vermont Freedom to Marry task force gathered in Davis Family Library last week to celebrate the 25th anniversary of statewide marriage equality.

One special object from the collection that Hurd, Watson and some attendees of the panel hold dear is Beth Robinson's binder from oral arguments at the Vermont Supreme Court for Baker v. State. It still holds her notes and remarks from that day in which she argued for equality under the law in front of the state's highest court — and won.

Although they will soon move on from researching the collection for Middlebury, an archivist's work may never truly be over.

"At the event the other day, a couple of people came up to us and were like, 'I still have things in my attic in my garage. Do you want them?'" Hurd said, noting that the still-growing collection already has over 100 boxes.

Although the Vermont Freedom to Marry task force no longer meets following their 2009 victory and the national legalization of gay marriage in Obergefell v. Hodges in 2015, the heart and soul of a movement that fought adamantly for equality now lives on in the accessible boxes, shelves and even freezers of Middlebury Special Collections.

Applications drop to five- year low as acceptance rate rises

Emma Willard House Admissions
131 South Main Street

TOM NEVINS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Middlebury saw its acceptance rate increase this year to 13.9%.

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through increasing total student enrollment to around 2,600-2,650.

"The Admissions Committee reviewed every submitted application from a highly qualified group of students who have demonstrated their rigorous academic preparation, personal fortitude, and deep curiosity for ideas," wrote Dean of Admissions Nicole Curvin in the announcement. "They are ready to join Middlebury's dynamic global community."

Despite the decline of the overall figures, the college received a record high number of international student applications. Admitted applicants represent 73 countries — 22 countries more than last year — and speak 95 languages, coming from 1,112 high schools around the world.

"I think the increase in international applicants shows that Middlebury is gaining recognition globally, likely because the school treats international students fairly well," Ivy Tan '28 said in an interview with The Campus. "You can actually tell that, compared to many other liberal arts colleges, Middlebury does have a relatively diverse student body."

Domestically, 49 states as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are represented by the admitted class, marking seven more states represented compared with last year. Eighteen percent of admitted students were first-generation, a two percentage point rise from last year.

This year, the college awarded $19.7 million of financial aid to the incoming class.

"Middlebury meets the full demonstrated need of all admitted students and is committed to providing access through a variety of resources to academic, social and pre-professional opportunities," the announcement read.

Middlebury is a test-optional school, meaning the college does not require applicants to submit their standardized test scores. This is the college's fifth year being test-optional, which many students take advantage of — 44% of admitted students this year did not submit their scores. Two years ago this testing policy was extended to next year's admits, the class of 2030.

Middlebury's admissions team has organized several events to recruit new students, including Preview Days in April and other live virtual information sessions.

"Throughout the month of April, Middlebury Admissions welcomed hundreds of admitted students and their families for Preview Days programming including class and dining hall visits, tours, and special programming that highlighted distinctive campus experiences. Admitted students met with faculty, staff and students to experience all that Middlebury offers," the college's announcement shared. "There were also virtual events providing a flexible way for admitted students to connect with each other and to the rest of the Middlebury community."

Despite an increased acceptance rate and a decline in applications — particularly domestic ones — Curvin emphasized the strength of Middlebury's applicant pool and the college's continued appeal to high school students.

"Our application count today remains well above the number we typically received pre-2019 [which was below 10,000]. Since 2015, we have received 33% more total applications," Curvin wrote. "Like many institutions, we saw record application increases during the COVID years bolstered by our new test optional pilot program."

She noted several factors that influence application numbers, including the decline in domestic high school graduates and increasing competition among peer elite liberal arts institutions. Middlebury, she added, continues to monitor its applicant pool closely to determine the appropriate acceptance rate.

"Colleges consider their admit rate each year based on the application volume, market shifts/student behavior and external factors," Curvin wrote. "This year we were closely watching the impact of federal policies related to higher education."

Some students expressed concern over this year's increased acceptance level and decline in applicants.

"For the domestic applications dropping, I think a bigger thing would have to [be standing] by like the political views and how people are perceiving Middlebury as a whole," Carlos Alvarado '28 said.

He also thought that Middlebury's recent drop in ranking from 11 to 19 in the U.S News & World Report national liberal arts colleges ranking could have contributed to this decrease in applications, as it is a factor influencing high school students' college choice.

"That was such a big drop. We were from 11 to 19, and I feel like that plays a big role because it's like when you're in high school, you're excited to apply to colleges, especially top colleges," Alvarado said. "And then you look at the ranking and like, 'Oh, I don't see myself going to a number 19 school.' I feel like that takes a bigger effect into how student life is portrayed here and how our academics are also kind of reflected on."

More detailed admissions data for the incoming class of 2029 and 2029.5 such as racial breakdowns and median test scores will be compiled in the fall.

COLLEGE ALTERS COMMENCEMENT SPEECH SELECTION PROCESS

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I want to stress that it was not the content of the [February] speech that was unacceptable — ours is a community that values and supports open expression — but rather the circumvention of the selection process," Ruzicka wrote in an email to The Campus.

The removal of the nomination process and student selection panel has prompted frustration amongst the senior class. Macy Daggitt '25 was interested in submitting a speech for commencement until she found out that B Striker had been appointed.

"I personally think that it was unfair for the administration to select the grad speaker on behalf of the class without consultation. I think there are lots of great public speakers in our class who would have very compelling and interesting things to say. Denying our class the ability to choose who we want to represent us at our own commencement is against the spirit of the day and the liberal arts education," Daggitt wrote in an email to The Campus.

However, Striker said he thought the decision makes sense.

"I feel like they did what they felt like they had to do to uphold the student speaker tradition. I understand, as does the student commencement speaker selection committee, that there will be discussions about how best to choose the student speaker going forward, and that the selection method for this May's graduation should be temporary," he wrote in an email to The Campus.

COURTESY PHOTOS

B Striker, left, and Chuck Davis, right, will speak at Commencement.

Striker reflected his gratitude for the opportunity to speak and hinted at some of the topics he hopes to touch on.

"With all the ways we've shared with this place and all the ways this place has shared with us, I feel humbled, reflective, and filled with Middlebury pride to speak these things into the narrative we've shaped together as the Class of 2025," he wrote.

Last week the college announced that Chuck Davis will deliver the 2025 commencement address. Davis, a career investment banker and philanthropist, attended Middlebury for two years before failing out and transferring to the University of Vermont.

He currently serves as CEO of Stone Point Capital, a Greenwich, Ct.-based investment firm which manages over $45 billion of assets primarily in the global financial services industry. Stone Point recruited interns from Middlebury for the first time this year, according to a Middlebury student who wished to remain anonymous.

The Honorary Degrees Committee is the trustee committee charged with recommending Commencement speakers and candidates for honorary degrees to Interim President Steve Snyder. This year's committee consisted of two students, Josh Harkins '25 and Maxine Sarrosa '25, as well as two faculty members, Peter Matthews, professor of Economics, and Brett Millier, professor of English and American literature. Matthews is one of 12 economics faculty members who pledged to boycott the commencement ceremony in protest of recent budget cuts.

The recommendation process is not public and Harkins was unable to disclose whether Davis was among the candidates recommended by the committee. However, Harkins told The Campus that he was not aware that Davis would be the speaker before the college's announcement to the public.

After being announced as the speaker, Davis and his team published a preliminary website dedicated to Davis's commencement speech. The website, called "middkit.com," opens to a homepage which reads, "Coming Soon," and a clock counting down to the exact moment of the start of the commencement ceremony. Across the site's tabs, visitors can read information about Davis and listen to his previous speeches and interviews. One of the tabs, "The Kit," explains his intention to provide resources for the Middlebury community beyond the commencement ceremony.

"Having only lasted 2 years at Middlebury, having flunked out both years, you are clearly ahead of where I was," the website reads. "I hope to provide you with a tool kit to help you live a happy and productive life. In addition, I will be available to the class of 2025 after graduation in case any of you want to engage."

Vice President for Advancement Dan Courcey explained in an email to The Campus that Davis will reference the site in his speech and send a note via the alumni office to all 2025 graduates with the link to the site and an invitation for interested graduates to engage in virtual discussion with him and his team.

This offer of resources to graduating students is unique amongst Middlebury commencement speakers, as speakers in recent years have provided neither a website nor advice to graduates in any official format.

Trump administration complicates job search for students, graduates

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in this one basket, and having it be potentially stripped away was incredibly jarring," she said.

Although Mumford feels more certain of her job offer with Terraset now that the rumors have temporarily rolled over, the experience of navigating the environmental job market during the Trump administration has reframed her outlook on the field.

"One of the things my boss texted me was, 'No one is safe, and this needs to be talked about more.' That struck me — that there really is no safe space in the environmental realm," she added.

Although the Trump administration has affected seniors' job searches, according to Ursula Olender, director of the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI), the number of students who have applied for internship funding is similar this year to last year.

The impacts of the Trump administration have also been felt by recent Middlebury graduates who already began to work their post-grad jobs. Ellie Hughes '24.5 has served as an Americorps member with Greater Portland Council of Governments since graduating in February, but last week, the federal government terminated all Americorps positions nationwide.

"We're actively working to apply public pressure to reinstate the funding and find ways to continue working in the interim, so lots of the details are still up in the air in terms of what exactly the termination notice means for us and on what timeline," Hughes explained.

The Greater Portland Council of Governments has independently funded Hughes's position through June, and she hopes the federal government might restore the funding in the meantime. Until then, Hughes anticipates having to restart her job search.

"I'll have to launch a premature job search in what I'm sure will be a very hostile job market. I want to spend my time supporting and improving community well-being through public sector work, and our elected officials clearly don't believe in that approach," she explained.

Next to Americorps on the chopping block is the cancellation of federal jobs at agencies like the State Department, along with the dissolution of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). However, Franchesca Belisle '25 plans on serving in the Peace Corps upon graduation and says her job working on maternal and child health initiatives in Togo has not been affected yet.

While the Peace Corps remains safe for now, Belisle said she was worried about potential cuts proposed by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to international aid and staffing.

"I do have some concerns about how broader U.S. policies might affect Peace Corps operations abroad, especially in ways that might affect my health work abroad — like access to supplies, training, or community partnerships. I'm hopeful things will stay stable, but it's something I'm thinking about as I prepare," Belisle said.

Other students reported feeling upset by the changes but not deterred from their larger mission of serving affected communities.

"It's a tough pill to swallow as we attempt to launch careers in public sector climate work. It's a path that has always required a certain degree of comfort navigating uncertainty and doom, but this moment in history feels like a new low," Hughes said. "We're all juggling a lot of anger and a lot of grief about what's happening to us and around us more broadly."

Tracy Himmel Isham, senior associate director of the CCI, advises students on fields including social impact, international development and the environment — some of the most vulnerable fields under the Trump administration. She said in an interview with The Campus that the number of jobs that have been lost is impossible to quantify, but the changes are undeniable.

As seniors struggle to find jobs in the fields that matter to them, one small bright side is that their common struggle may be bringing them together. Mumford mentioned that amongst her friends, many of whom have faced similar challenges, the experience has brought a sense of camaraderie.

"We're all in this together, and it's not going to be easy… supporting one another is just so critical during this time, and it has definitely brought us together in that we kind of all understand what we're going through," Mumford said.

Himmel Isham agreed that community is more important than ever. She encouraged students affected by the turmoil to reach out to alumni who faced similar periods of uncertainty upon graduating, such as during the 2008 financial crisis or the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Many have gone through similar periods of economic uncertainty when they were graduating and can share valuable advice and perhaps even alternative pathways which might help current students understand that they can pursue their dream jobs but maybe not in the most direct pathway as originally imagined," she wrote to The Campus.

In terms of advice for seniors, Himmel-Isham hopes that students will learn to embrace flexibility and intentionality in order to imagine new types of pivots they might be able to make in terms of sector, location or timeline.

"Times like these require flexibility to get where you might be heading… Developing a mindset that recognizes that everything you've worked towards here at Middlebury doesn't have to be just one version of who you are," she wrote.

The Middlebury Campus

We are seeking applicants for:

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Multimedia editors solicit, edit and write photo essays, narrative journalism pieces and feature stories. Prior experience with creative non-fiction writing, editing and photography preferred.

Please send a 1-2 paragraph statement of interest and brief writing sample to campus@middlebury.edu by 5/12

Applicants may only apply for one position.

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Summer in the Green Mountains: Your guide to local living in the warmer months

By **MADELEINE KAPTEIN & MANDY BERGHELA**
Managing Editor & Senior Local Editor

While plenty of students look forward to heading home for the summer after finally closing their books in Davis and throwing down their pens after their last final, a large cohort anticipate spending their annual hiatus from academics right here in the Green Mountains.

Whether you're registered for a Language School, working a job in town, guiding admissions tours on campus or interning up in Burlington, you should know that there is a lot more to a Vermont summer than just mosquito bites (please buy bug spray). As two seasoned local section editors and writers, we have compiled a collection of nearby upcoming events and activities to help you fight the beast of rural boredom.

A Middlebury favorite event is Festival on the Green from July 13–19. Described by Vermont Life as "the best series of free performances in Vermont," the weeklong event brings music, arts and community celebration to the heart of town. This year's festival will feature more than 15 performers from across the U.S. and abroad. Food will be available most evenings, provided by Mexico in Vermont. In previous years, the event has included street dancing and serves as a lively celebration of the arts with the community.

Vermont has a variety of different markets across the state for those who enjoy perusing fresh fruit or vegetables, or perhaps looking to support local arts vendors. On Saturdays, the Middlebury Farmers market is open to the public in the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post parking lot on Exchange Street from May to October. Vendors sell fresh produce and maple syrup among other seasonal treats. On Thursdays, the iconic Middlebury Summer Market features work from artisans, food vendors, locally grown produce and occasional live music. The Burlington Farmers Market will be open Saturday mornings at 345 Pine Street.

Looking for ways to get outside and into nature this summer? Vermont has no shortage of beautiful hiking trails and recreational activities in the state. From hiking up Mount Abraham, taking a kayak out on Lake Dunmore, or embarking on a walk on the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM), there are plenty of ways to get outside. The Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT) will host several different trail walks, and will partner with the Town Hall Theater to host a "Theater Walk" which will include an outdoor play on the TAM by the MALT Summer Camp on July 11. MALT also will be hosting its Mid-Summer Volunteer Day on July 26, a day in which community members can come together to clean up the TAM.

If you're a fan of quirky festivals, you're in luck for this summer. Outside of Middlebury, the 45th annual Quechee Balloon Festival will take place on June 20–22 in Quechee, Vt. The first ever Quechee Balloon Festival is what put Queechee on the map in 1978 and has prevailed as a tradition ever since — riding a hot air balloon is an option with a fee, but so is simply watching the colorful balloons populate the New England sky at no cost but an afternoon.

Although you'll have to choose wisely: The Vermont Renaissance fair is the same weekend at Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex Junction, June 21–22. In the same venue August 9–10 is the Vermont Psychic Expo, with a price of $20–30 per person to meet the most reputable psychic readers in the state. Find out for yourself if you believe in mediums, palmistry and the powers of crystals — you might leave surprised or a skeptic.

On August 1, the alt-weekly local newspaper Seven Days will host their annual Seven Daysies Awards Party at the ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain from 7–10 p.m. Readers of Seven Days vote in several rounds leading up to the awards on the "bests" of Vermont, in categories from artists to places to picnic to businesses of all kinds. The awards are an opportunity for winners and locals to celebrate their "favorites" that make Vermont feel like home. Browsing the list of last year's winners online is also not a bad way to find out where you might want to catch a concert, eat a burger or retreat for a camping weekend this summer, either.

Building your summer bucket list is a daunting task, but we hope we have made it just a little bit easier if you are staying in Vermont. Whenever you think you have found the most enticing swimming hole, the best spot for creemees or the most impressive live music, there is always more going on just around the corner, even in a place as small as Vermont.

MADELEINE KAPTEIN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

A double rainbow following a storm on campus in the summer of 2023.

Vermont Cookie Love to open new location on Main Street

By **ARIELLA FROMER**
Contributing Writer

Vermont Cookie Love, a franchise known for its delicious baked cookies, cookie dough and creemees, is set to open a new location at 40 Main Street in Middlebury in the fall, where the bakery Chim Chimney formerly had a home.

The business began at the Shelburne Farmers Market, where it opened up 15 years ago and built a following selling fresh-baked cookies and cookie dough. In 2009, the company opened its "Love Shack" headquarters at 6915 Route 7 in North Ferrisburgh, Vt., which has since become a local favorite. Now, the menu features a dozen types of cookies in addition to seasonal specialties.

Matt Bonoma, the current owner, purchased Vermont Cookie Love in 2021 after 10 years of consulting and investing in startup food and beverage companies, including Cookie Love itself. After moving to Vermont with his wife, he was looking for a company to buy and felt drawn to Cookie Love. While his background is in the financials and operations of businesses, the process of baking and formulation has always interested him. Now, he is a leader on the team in recipe development.

Bonoma plans to hire his staff from the Middlebury area, including Middlebury students.

"We are really excited to be working with the students and the college, and I would love to be in a position where our staff is made up of a great cast of Middlebury students," Bonoma said in an interview with The Campus. "Presuming there is interest, it's a nice job where if someone wanted to work 4–5 hours a week after classes, we could accommodate that."

The chocolate chip cookie is the bakery's best seller, accounting for half of the cookies they sell.

"We have a special way of baking the cookies that gives you a crispy, well-done exterior and a really soft interior. Whether you're a hard cookie or soft cookie person, there's something for you to like," Bonoma said.

On the ice cream side, they are best known for their cremees, and their maple-coffee twist in particular. Bonoma prides his business for having won best cremee in Seven Daysies — Seven Days' annual best of Vermont awards — for nine years in a row.

Determining how to operate efficiently in a space that is different from their current location is Cookie Love's team's current challenge.

"Figuring out where to put machines, ice cream freezers, and ovens so that it works well for both the team and customers is the other thing [we've] spent a lot of time on," Bonoma said. "I will be the first one to admit we've never done this before, so there's a lot of learning as we go and every day you think of a new problem that needs to be solved."

Locally sourced ingredients are a pillar of Vermont Cookie Love.

"The closer to home we're sourcing the ingredients, the more we are supporting our community, the higher quality ingredients we are getting, and the more the people supplying the ingredients have a reason to care about what we're doing — because they often feel the same way about supporting small local businesses," Bonoma said.

Vermont Cookie Love works with Wilcox, Kingdom Creamery, Cabot, Monument Farms and several other local businesses.

"There's a big advantage to making sure that all those dollars are staying here locally," Bonoma said. "We are working with the leadership team at these companies, they are much more responsive to our needs and wants than a big faceless company from out of state can be."

The current Vermont Cookie Love team consists of five full-time employees and about 12 part-time seasonal workers who are high school and college-aged students.

"I think it speaks highly of the business that a lot of our staff started during their high school years and are still coming back and working with us every summer, so we feel proud of that fact," Bonoma said.

Vermont Cookie Love is focusing on the short-term right now and ensuring a smooth opening of the Middlebury location.

"We want to keep doing what we're doing well here in North Ferrisburgh, make Middlebury a big success, and then we'd love to look for more opportunities down the line," Bonoma said.

COURTESY PHOTO / VERMONT COOKIE LOVE

Vermont Cookie Love has won "best creemee" in the Vermont publication Seven Days' annual awards, Seven Daysies, for nine years in a row.

SPECS Panther Column: The sexy illusions of reality TV: Consent, masculinity & the mess in between

Op-Ed

Aiden Levy *is a member of the class of 2025 and a SPECS Peer-Educator.*

SPECS Panther is a mascot for SPECS (sex positive education for college students) and serves the Middlebury community. As a part of Health & Wellness Education, SPECS Panther seeks to educate and spark independent dialogue, not be the end-all be-all resource on campus. We encourage Midd Kids to break down the walls of silence by engaging in sex-positive conversation — wherever, with whomever, and about whatever is most comfortable, easy and safe for you. Our editions will be fun and educational!

Watching TV is a uniquely American pastime. Almost 80% of U.S. adults who watch TV tune into reality series, 39% of which are dating shows. Younger demographics are the primary audiences, mainly women ages 18 to 34. In fact, Netflix's "Love Is Blind" was ranked in 2024 as the second most streamed original show in the U.S., totaling 16.45 billion minutes. These reality dating shows tap into human nature, providing a temporary escapist route in a world fractured by divisiveness where viewers have an easier time relating to and establishing parasocial relationships with an accessible on-screen cast. Still, their growth and marketing results in a complicated reality: The simultaneously negative, but also surprisingly positive, portrayals of consent, sexuality and masculinity.

While reality dating shows are not new, their historical trajectory, particularly with consent, is nothing short of controversial. In 2006, on "Big Brother Australia," contestants Michael Cox and Michael Bric were kicked out and referred to the police after footage caught one allegedly holding down Camilla Severi, another contestant, while the other unconsensually rubbed his penis in her face. The sexual assault, seemingly facilitated by the show's lax oversight and alcohol policies, was met with such fierce public backlash that the Prime Minister at the time advised the show to be discontinued. Severi's story is not a one-off. In 2012, Tonya Cooley filed a lawsuit alleging that she was dismissed from "The Real World" after she reported that she was raped by two of her male housemembers while incapacitated. Or in 2015, when "The Challenge" contestant Nia Moore sexually assaulted her ex Jordan Wiseley, forcibly removing his pants, touching his genitals and yelling a homophobic slur at him.

While much has changed in reality dating rules — "Love Island" strictly limits alcohol — problematic behaviors persist. During "Love Island UK" in summer 2022, for example, Women's Aid accused the show of enabling "misogyny and controlling behaviour." Critics argue that the premise of many of these shows center love as a sexual conquest won through coercion and control, where contestants are treated like transferable objects.

The female contestants are regularly portrayed as overly emotional and hysterical, strong-armed into a performance of heteronormative stereotypes like the 'crazy' woman trope. Especially with more unregulated formats, the lines between consent and coercion blur, allowing for microaggressions, slut-shaming and inflammatory racial remarks to continue unchallenged.

Still, reality dating shows resist a normative framework. Female contestants can actively engage and have freedom over their pleasure and sexual experiences. Multiple leads regularly promote sex-positivity and feel empowered by their time on set, from Katie Thurston on "The Bachelorette" embracing her 'vibrator girl' persona to Giannina Milady Gibelli on "Love is Blind" communicating with her fiance about being unsatisfied with their sex life to the staple Yoni puja workshop in "Too Hot To Handle" where self-expression and body positivity are explored through vulva-themed art.

Reality dating shows also evolve alongside cultural norms. "Temptation Island" host Mark Walberg commented that "what has happened is that this generation, the people that are on the show now, we kind of dispelled some of the fakeness of how we were back then. In other words, if you feel sexual, you're allowed to be sexual. There's less shame behind action, so people are living their best life." Even the creation of "The Bachelorette" — a spin-off of the acclaimed "The Bachelor" — enables a female-led perspective on dating.

And not all of the attention is directed toward romantic relationships. In "The Real Housewives," the women are unabashedly themselves and engage in both realistic romantic relationships and, more iconically, friendships. Thus, the main audience takeaway extends to the touching displays of platonic friendship, which are more likely to last after the conclusion than even the couples themselves.

Newer frontiers are also emerging. Efforts to be more inclusive with sexuality, demographics or gender roles are slow-moving in the industry, but change is occuring. "Love Trip: Paris" features a queer and POC cast, while Japan's "The Boyfriend" focuses exclusively on same-sex relationships. In 2024, "Love Island UK" finally crowned a Black couple as their winner via public vote. These recent developments have destabilized the normative portrait of an almost exclusively heterosexual, white and thin bodied cast, allowing for viewers to feel more directly represented. Still, there remains the question of tokenism and performativity. Stereotyped media representations of Black women in particular regularly portray the hyper-aggressive and angry woman or the hyper-sexualized Jezebel who is a seductress.

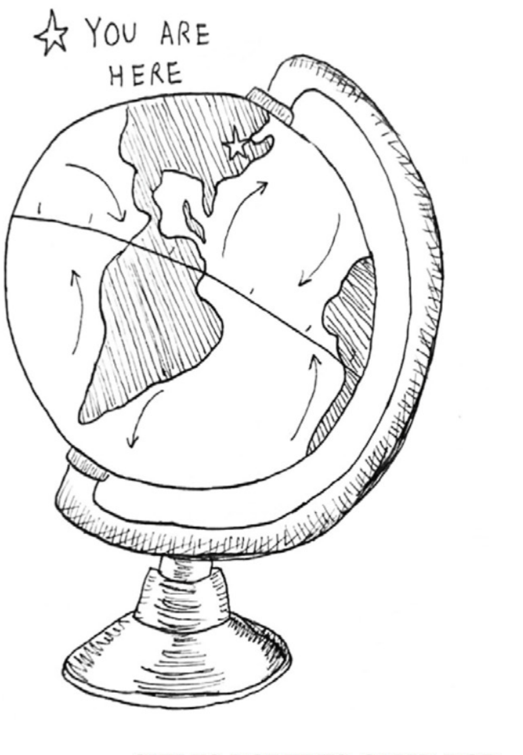
Most surprising, however, is the subtle subversion of traditional masculinity. "Love Island USA" summer 2024 showcased a scattering of authentic representations of male-male friendships, entrusted with emotional support that destigmatized gentle intimacy. The 'bromance' bond between Rob Rausch and Aaron Evans, despite their questionable individual romantic pursuits, granted viewers an insider understanding of socialization, advice-seeking and a softer side to modern masculinity than usually depicted on TV. In fact, Evans — from the U.K. — and Rausch — from Alabama — learned from each other's unique lived experiences of the American and European conceptions of masculinity.

Ultimately, reality dating shows are nothing more than smoke and mirrors, a fact viewers are capable enough to understand. While a utopian future for the industry is overblown, significant positive steps forwards have been made to make today's landscape ripe for an active, albeit cautious, viewing. Acknowledging the limitations of the genre allows for productive conversations on what is real: Sex, consent, gender and masculinity.

"I am my own advisor:" How Middlebury's model interdisciplinary major lets students fall through the cracks

Op-Ed

Curran Amster *is a member of the class of 2026 and an Opinions Editor.* **Evan Weiss** *is a member of the class of 2025 and a News Editor.*



SKILES ROBERTS-SALVADOR

International and Global Studies (IGS) is one of Middlebury's most popular majors. It offers students the opportunity to critically analyze global trends, to specialize in a region or theme of study and to develop foreign language skills before using them while abroad. It should be the Middlebury exemplar for taking our Vermont-based interdisciplinary education global.

Yet, if you ask nearly any IGS major, they will tell you that despite their academic drive and genuine pursuit of an interdisciplinary experience, they have faced repeated institutional barriers and lacked support when registering for courses, declaring a thesis and finding an advisor.

As IGS majors, we believe that the value of a global studies education at Middlebury is in developing a global consciousness, studying a foreign language and building a cross-discipline array of skills. We wish that our major had the institutional support to fully engage students with these values.

The major's confusion begins with selecting an advisor. Students are directed to pick from a track-specific list of professors who work in or with the IGS department. It is unclear how these advisor lists are formulated — in our experience, several professors do not even know which lists they are on.

The academic flexibility and decentralization the IGS major offers is oftentimes its appeal, but it comes at the price of a centralized student community. Outside of the two required courses, there are few opportunities provided and no spaces designed to foster connection between majors. By the time you arrive in a senior seminar course, it's possible you still won't know the majority of the students in the room.

This is particularly surprising because Middlebury has an entire program for studying global issues — the Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs — that regularly hosts speakers and works to cultivate opportunities for student leadership and career development. Unfortunately, there is no organizational link between the IGS major and the Rohatyn Center, leaving majors disconnected from this wealth of resources.

Perhaps the cornerstone of IGS's structural shortcomings is the ambiguity and lack of support throughout the thesis declaration and research process. IGS is one of the few majors without its own methodology course or methodology requirement for writing a thesis. The IGS website provides various suggestions for how to prepare for a thesis, such as taking another department's methodology course or conducting related research with a professor.

I (Evan) read on the IGS website that to write a history-adjacent thesis, I should register for HIST600, the department's pre-thesis course, which I was then not allowed to register for because I'm not a history major. This guidance has since been deleted from the IGS website and filled with no replacement.

Individual advisors work diligently to support their advisees, but they cannot and should not be expected to provide course-equivalent methodological guidance while also actively advising a thesis. Not having an IGS methods course — or guaranteed equivalent — both fails students and unduly burdens professors.

I (Curran) met with a Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) advisor the spring of my first year looking for academic guidance, and the CCI emphatically told me I should do an interdisciplinary major rather than a double or joint major. They touted the benefits of International Politics and Economics and IGS, citing the built-in language and abroad requirements along with the ability to take course offerings across departments.

I followed their advice and took the Introduction to International and Global Studies course, which sold me on the major. It combined political science and history in a way that I felt enhanced my learning and would correspond well with language study. If I had known about the undue burden placed on professors and the limits to what students are provided in the way of research preparation, I still may have pursued an IGS major, but I would have done so with more foresight.

We hope that future IGS majors will have a required methods course, bridging the gap between the introductory course and senior seminars and research work; we hope that they will be given more clarity and afforded more flexibility when selecting an advisor; we hope that Middlebury will invest in its IGS professors, including funding more than one permanent professorship; and we hope that a communal space will be fostered, such as in the Robert A. Jones House (RAJ), for IGS students to meet and collaborate with one another.

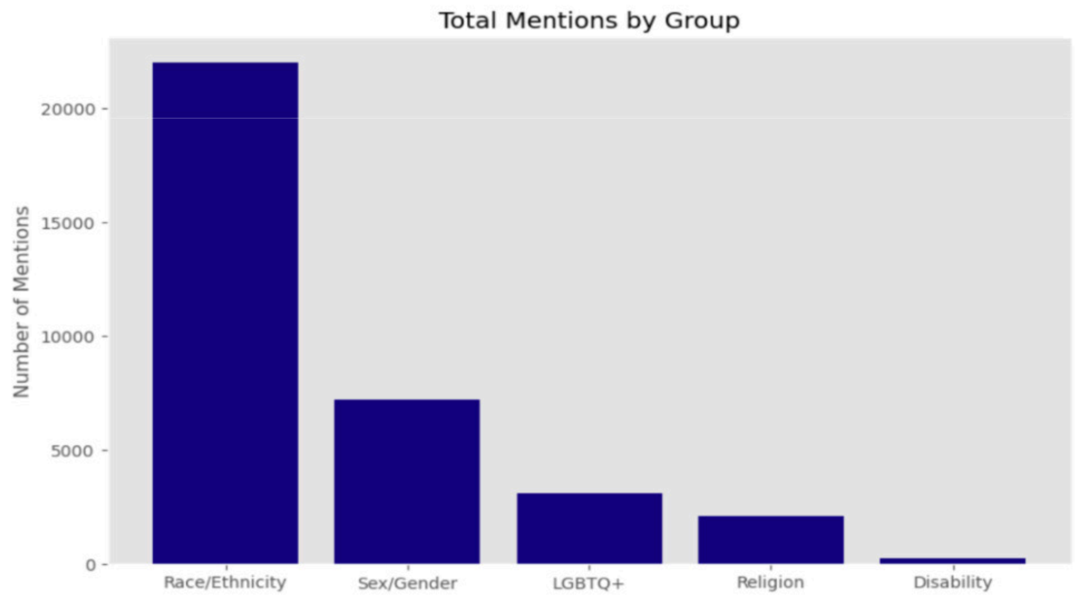
To be clear: We believe in the IGS major. We value taking classes across disciplines and studying abroad. But this experience could be improved if students are truly supported.

If Middlebury continues to flout the concerns of IGS students and faculty — while advertising the major on its website and in the CCI — it should look inside its institutional soul and re-assess just how "immersive" and "globally engaged" its educational offerings really are.

WE ANALYZED THE POLITICIZATION OF DEI IN U.S. MEDIA

Op-Ed

This piece was written by students in the Media Portrayals of Minorities Project Lab.



COURTESY PHOTO / TING CUI

The lab's research has found that politicization of DEI rapidly accelerated in early 2023, primarily focusing on race/ethnicity, sex/gender, and LGBTQ+ topics.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has undergone a dramatic transformation in public discourse over the past decade. What began in the 2010s as a neutral descriptor for diversity and affirmative action programs which emerged in the decades following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has recently evolved into a politically charged buzzword. Today, it has morphed into perhaps the most divisive three-letter acronym in America.

The increasingly critical media coverage of DEI may have helped set the stage for President Trump's 2025 executive order ending "radical and wasteful DEI programs within the federal government" —– a dramatic reversal from the egalitarian impulse behind the original Civil Rights Act. As the Trump administration and legislators across the country demonstrate clear hostility toward DEI in government and higher education, understanding patterns and narratives in media coverage is crucial for developing strategies to communicate the value of creating diverse, equitable and inclusive environments that benefit everyone.

This semester, the six of us worked together in Professor of Political Science Erik Bleich's Media Portrayals of Minorities Project (MPoMP) Lab, which undertakes text-as-data analyses of coverage of marginalized communities. We analyzed the 1,855 articles that mentioned "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion" or "DEI" published between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2024 in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today. Our results show how media coverage transformed DEI from a policy descriptor to a tagline for the right to attack the left, how American discourse has increasingly narrowed the identities associated with DEI, and how people in the real world suffered consequences, being labeled "DEI hires" as a result of this shift. We published the results of this research in a three-part series on the lab's website.

DEI only gained consistent media attention following George Floyd's murder in May 2020, when coverage of these initiatives surged as part of a broader focus on racial justice. Initially, this coverage was largely positive, with DEI efforts described as "long overdue" and as a "powerful antidote" to divisive concepts like "cancel culture" and "wokeness."

However, by late 2021, mounting skepticism appeared. Critics increasingly described DEI initiatives as "quick fixes" lacking substance, while others raised concerns about academic censorship and "self-censorship" in university settings. The politicization of DEI accelerated dramatically in early 2023, as evidenced by the sharp increase in articles mentioning both "DEI" and "woke" — a term already thoroughly stigmatized by the political right.

The transformation of DEI from progressive policy to culture war buzzword follows a familiar pattern that we've seen with other social justice terms like "intersectionality," "critical race theory" and "woke." All have undergone profound shifts in meaning as culture war rhetoric has come to dominate public discourse.

DEI, by definition, addresses discrimination across numerous dimensions (race, gender, religion, disability, age, etc.), but media coverage has focused predominantly on a narrow set of identity categories. Our analysis across major publications revealed that race or ethnicity (84%), sex or gender (67%), and LGBTQ+ topics (35%) dominated DEI-related coverage, while religion (25%) and disability (5.3%) received significantly less attention.

Even within the most-covered category of race/ethnicity content was highly imbalanced. Black or African American individuals were mentioned in over half of all articles (56%), while Latino or Hispanic (18%), Asian (13%) and Indigenous (11%) groups received far less attention. Interestingly, "White" appeared almost as frequently as "Black" in DEI coverage (51%), though in dramatically different contexts.

Before mid-2021, articles discussing Black Americans often portrayed DEI programs as not doing enough to address workplace discrimination and create opportunities. By 2023, however, the narrative shifted, increasingly portraying Black Americans as "unqualified DEI hires." In contrast, articles mentioning White Americans frequently described them as feeling cheated by DEI programs that were doing too much for Black workers or posing challenges specifically for White ones.

Who are the people who have ultimately paid the price for this politicization?

At the Virginia Military Institute in 2021, Major General Cedric Wins, the institute's first Black superintendent, was appointed to address the institution's documented problems with racism and sexism. His DEI initiatives, including removing a Confederate statue and establishing a diversity committee, sparked significant backlash from alumni. Despite his qualifications, Wins was labeled a "woke hire" and ultimately lost his position.

A similar story played out at Texas A&M University. Kathleen McElroy was offered a tenured position as journalism program director in June 2023. When conservative alumni disapproved of her previous DEI work, her contract was repeatedly downgraded until she ultimately rejected the offer. While Texas A&M later reached a $1 million settlement with McElroy, apologizing and acknowledging "hiring process mistakes," the damage had already been done.

In both cases, a highly qualified person of color was pushed out to appease conservative alumni and financial stakeholders, with their racial identity making them vulnerable to being labeled as "DEI" or "woke" hires regardless of merit. These highly publicized media scandals reinforce existing prejudices that DEI is merely performative and prioritizes identity over merit. Such a characterization ultimately distorts public perception and diverts attention from how DEI initiatives could effectively establish institutional equity.

The Media Portrayals of Minorities Project Lab this semester includes Andy Cao '25, Ting Cui '25.5, Eva Janairo '28, YiJun Kim '26, Daniza Tazabekova '26 and Abby Ward '25.

HEY MIDDLEBURY…YOUR CLASSISM IS SHOWING

Op-Ed

Caitlin Harder *is the academic coordinator for the Religion and Anthropology departments, as well as the First Year Seminar program and the Administration Committee.*

RYAN MCELROY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Middlebury administrators recently announced budget cuts to faculty and staff retirement benefits, as well as a buyout program aiming to reduce the staff workforce by 40-50 people.

Middlebury's classism is genteel, and it's easy to dismiss when times are good. This past month, it has become harder to ignore.

It's the Trustee thanking the server profusely for the breakfast she just served him, then closing the door to discuss just how much to raise her health insurance premium next year. It's the president describing us as a big family, before handing the mic to the senior administrator… who promptly reduces us to a series of numbers on paper, to be selectively compared with an amorphous mass of "peer institutions" in order to justify our leaders' decisions. It's the tenured professor graciously asking staff for their input on how faculty should protest the budget cuts, but not thinking to ask whether the staff might want to protest alongside them. And through all of this, it's the hushed voices of colleagues in the break room saying, "If we just keep our heads down, maybe the target won't be on our backs."

It is clear that the decision-makers at the college are capitalizing on the tendency among staff to stay in our corner and uphold our side of the bargain: to skillfully do the jobs Middlebury hired us to do, to be good to our community and to avoid rocking the boat unnecessarily. The problem is that Middlebury College is not currently upholding its side of that social contract.

Through all the meetings, emails and op-eds, I haven't yet seen acknowledgement that lower-income workers — a category many Middlebury staff fall into — are disproportionately affected by the economic turmoil currently shaking the United States. This economic uncertainty can be felt heavily in Vermont, with its low rate of expendable income paired with an ever-higher cost of living. Many staff were already wondering if we would be able to pay all our bills and put food on the table from week to week, before our employer joined in the pile-on without warning — acting as though the budget deficit was a sudden emergency that must be solved immediately, rather than a years-long issue which could have been addressed calmly.

This is about more than the four percent cut to employee retirement benefits. Something as "small" as another increase in our out-of-pocket healthcare expenses could mean the difference between a staff member paying their rent or going into medical debt. Worse, the underlying threat of layoffs has created an existential fear, threatening the reciprocal goodwill between the employees who serve the institution and those who have been charged with leading it.

The Middlebury community has been told repeatedly over the past month that everything happening now is the alternative to The Other Option, which is to terminate 140 staff members. This narrative tells faculty and students that the sacrifices they are being forced to make are to "save" the staff. What it tells staff is that at the end of the day, we are expendable.

We have been told in one breath that there's "no pressure" to accept the early retirement package, but in the next breath, reminded that if this plan doesn't work, "other options" will need to be explored. We can all read between the lines to figure out what that means. It also tells us that no matter how thinly we are already stretched, we will likely be expected to take on the workload of anyone accepting the retirement package who is not replaced, presumably without added compensation. Not only is this unethical, but it ignores the crux of the matter. Middlebury is not just part of a mass of other institutions. It has its own structure, budget, identity and reputation — not only as a one-of-a-kind school, but as a good employer. That is what is really at risk.

At Middlebury, students are taught how to think critically and question the stories they are told. I hope all of us will exercise that skill moving forward.

To the senior leaders who are implying that staff are more expendable than faculty and students: Please pause for a moment and imagine what would happen if we stopped performing the often invisible labor that takes place on campus every day.

To the Board of Trustees: This institution has benefited for years from its ability to attract and retain highly qualified and loyal employees, in a region where staffing shortages are real. It would be shortsighted to continue to take that privilege for granted.

To faculty calling for collective action: Please don't miss the opportunity to include staff in your efforts. We have more power together.

Most importantly, to my fellow staff members: The history of capitalism shows that the target is already on workers' backs. Silence isn't going to protect our livelihoods, but relentless self-advocacy might.

A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS FOR WHOM?

Op-Ed

Maggie Bryan *is the Senior News Editor and member of the class of 2025.* **Evan Weiss** *is a News Editor and member of the class of 2025.* **Julia Roth is a** *member of the class of 2025.*

Last Tuesday, the college announced that Chuck Davis, CEO of private equity firm Stone Point Capital, will deliver this year's commencement address. Upon receiving the news, we felt both confused and disappointed.

As seniors entering our final days on campus, we feel an immense sense of gratitude for our academic, extracurricular and personal experiences at Middlebury. However, we do not feel that Davis is representative of, or truthful to, these experiences. We want to make it abundantly clear that our criticisms are not about Davis as a person; rather, they are about Middlebury's choice of an investment executive as a role model for its graduates.

Our Middlebury courses have valued interdisciplinary and innovative thought; they have rewarded active class engagement; above all, they have brought us to question normative narratives. They have taught us that as far as our learning is interconnected, so too are the world's most pressing problems. Climate change, migration, access to health care, political instability, authoritarianism — these are all inextricably linked to ever-growing economic inequality. Based on this spring's Zeitgeist 7.0 survey, we know that many of our classmates agree.

So as Middlebury defines itself as "an institution that prepares students to address the world's most challenging problems," it feels disingenuous to platform for its graduates someone whose work epitomizes capitalistic gain and exacerbates the wealth gap.

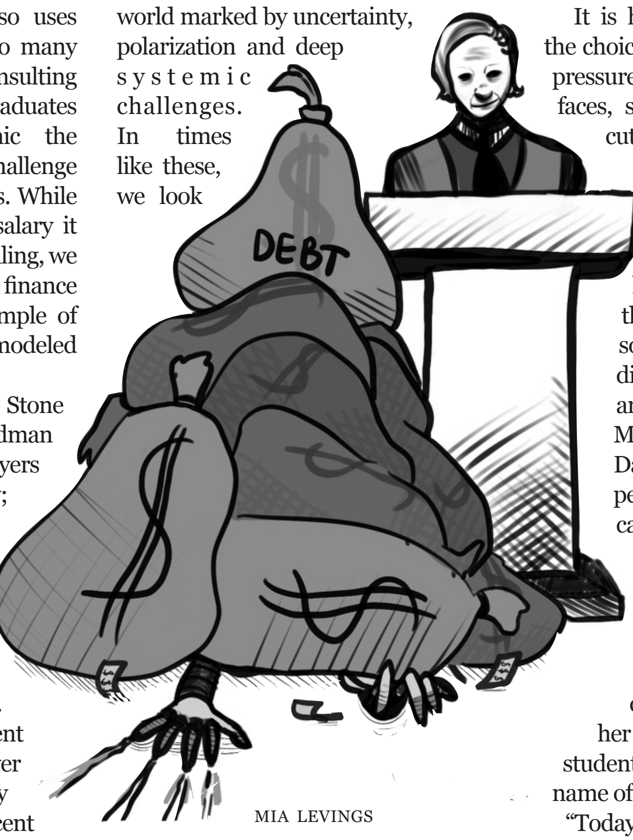
We have not overlooked that Davis has made significant contributions toward cancer research and has given back meaningfully to Vermont communities. He even intends to continue mentoring Middlebury students, a commitment that few commencement speakers have made. However, his career parallels that of many revered business executives who dually function as philanthropists, coating the wrongs of their corporations with the rights of their foundations. Without diminishing the true, measurable impacts of their benevolence, these dollars still stand as proof of success building corporate wealth, not dismantling the inequities it perpetuates.

Stone Point Capital also uses parallel recruiting tactics to many other banking and consulting companies, hiring undergraduates into 'classes' that mimic the stability, camaraderie and challenge of college clubs and courses. While this — and the six-figure salary it comes with — may be appealing, we wish that entry-level roles in finance were not the primary example of challenge and community modeled at our graduation.

Investment firms like Stone Point Capital and Goldman Sachs are not neutral players in the modern economy; rather, they deepen existing inequalities and divisions by prioritizing short-term gains for investors over long-term sustainability, equity and resilience. Stone Point's investment portfolio comprises over 100 companies, many of which have faced recent scandals and lawsuits. Perhaps the most ironic of these cases is with Freedom Financial Network, which was sued by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the New York Attorney General for misleading and exploiting consumers in distress. Given that about a quarter of graduates at May commencement will walk across the stage with thousands of dollars in student loans, platforming a CEO whose company endorses the exploitation of clients in debt feels like a poor decision.

Many of Stone Point Capital's investments, while defensible on Wall Street, represent business models that profit from systemic inequalities or financial distress. Like most of the other large banks and private equity firms with whom Middlebury students vie for internships, Stone Point Capital symbolizes elite capital and the exacerbation of inequality — the opposite of what has been preached in our classes at Middlebury. Arguably, it even counters Middlebury's mission statement, which claims to "foster the inquiry, equity, and agency necessary… to practice ethical citizenship."

We approach this year's commencement ceremony in a world marked by uncertainty, polarization and deep systemic challenges. In times like these, we look to leaders and thinkers who inspire us and embody the kind of courage and imagination necessary to tackle the trials ahead. What Middlebury needs now more than ever is a speaker representing hope, justice and public service.



MIA LEVINGS

In recent years, Middlebury has invited speakers like Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, a marine biologist and conservation expert, and Terry Tempest Williams, a writer and environmental activist. These are examples of people whose lives and work have embodied values of justice and care for the world; these are figures who have asked us to think critically and creatively about the future.

We must also remark on the lack of an open nomination process surrounding the choice of a student speaker this year, following two politically-charged student speeches last May and this February. Like the commencement address, the student speaker should be chosen through a representative process, allowing the speech to channel the values and topics most consequential for the graduating class. Neither should be cherry-picked by the administration in a defensive, secretive manner.

It is hard not to wonder if the choice of Davis reflects new pressures that Middlebury faces, such as recent budget cuts, a dropping college ranking and national threats to higher education. These pressures might have resulted in the college selecting someone unlikely to disrupt the status quo and draw attention to Middlebury — a role Davis fits well as the personification of the capitalist status quo.

Megan Mayhew Bergman, a writer and Assistant Professor of English, was the speaker at February commencement. In her remarks, she asked students to take risks in the name of righteousness:

"Today I want to challenge you to think not about rules, but about disobedience. Strategic and compassionate disobedience. I want you to think about how you will take the privilege of this degree and put it to work to shape the world and the spaces in which you move."

While Davis's work may be an inspiration for some, we believe Middlebury can make a stronger choice. This decision is out of harmony with the spirit of the community we've built here at Middlebury — one grounded in curiosity, connectedness and courage.

LET THEM EAT CAKE

Op-Ed

Joey Disorbo *is a member of the class of 2025.5.*

Three hundred million dollars. Imagine this sum for Middlebury — a king's ransom. With this sum, we could build forty-two Atwater Dining halls. With this sum we could have Beyoncé at every spring concert for the next three decades. With this sum we could give over 3,000 students full ride scholarships; we could double every faculty retirement plan; we could subsidize every staff vehicle. We could even buy 1.2 million Aritzia Puffer jackets, if it were up to MCAB.

But we cannot do any of these things. Not because we don't have the money, but because we already spent it. Three hundred million dollars: the lifetime sunk cost of Monterey. Three hundred million dollars, not just gone, but invisible.

How is this possible? This is because our tuition money, plain and simple, does not appear to be meant for us, but for a mission much larger.

Once you see it, you can't unsee it: Middlebury wants to be its own Roman Empire. The administration's recent decision to deprioritize the main college in favor of its colonial project in Monterey demonstrates that its ambitions — and financial resources — were meant for bigger things than mere students. Much of what Middlebury has been and is doing now is the result of an agenda that is strikingly Imperial in its demands: To expand, in size and scope, indefinitely.

The college's multigenerational ambitions are completely transparent. The most significant administrative decisions — its "arts agora," for example — are made on timelines far beyond what could ever be relevant to current students. There is a Rube Goldberg sequence of new buildings scheduled for the next half-century whose architectural choices keep erring toward the behemoth. BiHall, the new Battell, and Mega-Proctor are all militaristically super-scaled, all absolute affronts to the "Quaint Vermont" that Middlebury tries to sell.

Foresight is necessary. But our foresight has become Ozymandian. The administration has positioned its sights so far above the clouds that it can no longer understand or relate to its students, staff, or faculty. The effect is that they ask us to tighten our belts for the sake of a future that is completely removed from us.

It is one thing for neglect to creep as administrators spread themselves thin managing the colonies. But it is another when Middlebury, to preserve itself, sacrifices its employees. Or when it begins to hinder or even actively prohibit its students from doing the things they want in college.

Middlebury's need to preserve itself at the cost of its subjects is painfully evident; Kafka's nightmares come true as the Student Activities Office, ResLife and Events Management reach new levels of bureaucratic absurdity in their attempts to monitor student life while maintaining plausible deniability. We are in the dark ages — thou shalt not conveneth without thy Lord's permission; thou shalt not playeth club lacrosse; thou shalt always keepeth "trained crowd manager." They would sooner banish fun altogether than risk a litigious controversy that would threaten their generational ambitions. Some of these offices may as well be in Aruba for how little they understand and relate to our student experience (or how little they can legally admit to).

Middlebury's expansionist fervor has come at a price. It seems that Middlebury has gotten so excited about its mission to "prepare students to lead engaged, consequential, and creative lives" that it has cut out the middleman altogether. Students have a duty to enact change in the world, but administrative zeal has lifted that duty from the students and given it to itself instead. The only satisfaction that a small liberal arts college is allowed is a vicarious one: seeing its students succeed. If Middlebury cares about generating the movers and shakers of the world, it must let its ego die.

Whether or not our administration is seeing Caesar in the mirror, it seems they have forgotten that Rome fell from the inside. And our core — students, staff and faculty of the college — is writhing.

Ask any long-term tenured professor if they agree that the foundation is cracking. "Unauthorized use of A.I." in academic work has doubled every year for the past three years, and despite its recent defanging, the Honor Code is still nothing but a limp scarecrow if professors do not have the spine to enforce it. And why would they? Would this institution sooner fire them to protect itself? This question is the root of grade inflation. — fear of the entitled student. The only export that should matter to Middlebury is a high-quality education, and with academia on the rocks, if we are not firing on all cylinders to maintain the quality of a Middlebury Education, we are failing.

If Middlebury wants to remain true to its mission, my advice, now writ large, is for the timely withdrawal of its commitments from Monterey. Furthermore, the Middlebury Schools Abroad, Language Schools, and even Bread Loaf invite scrutiny given their status as satellite programs. If the integrity of Middlebury's core institution, the original college, is threatened, damaged, or otherwise in any way diminished due to its external efforts, these efforts are antithetical to our mission, and their continuation must be reconsidered.

But allow me to speak in language that administrators might understand: You are alienating potential donors. In fact, I can personally guarantee that this institution won't get so much as a charitable cent from me until it can demonstrate an actionable commitment to channeling its resources back into its core. Because if the core falters, everything falters. And I cannot in earnest support an institution that will not support those for whom its alleged mission is dedicated.

The Middlebury Campus

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The Middlebury Campus

CHATGPT IS NOT YOUR FRIEND

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

The Middlebury Campus
Susanna Schatz

The future of academia and human capability has been called into question in the past several years with the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Perhaps nowhere is this concern more pressing than in a classroom, where A.I. has weakened trust between professors and students, made cheating more normalized and enabled some people at Middlebury to skate through their classes without truly learning.

We can't deny that A.I. is here to stay — it is part of every student's future. Therefore, we must be adaptive and flexible while also maintaining our core principles. Middlebury students should recognize the intrinsic worth of an education independent of artificial intelligence.

A.I. has achieved an irreversible role on college and university campuses across the country, and Middlebury is no exception. Strolling by rows of study carrels in Davis Family Library, it does not take long to find a student consulting ChatGPT for an assignment. It would be counterproductive to say that generative A.I. should be completely disregarded — it has several useful applications that can save time and resources, and some faculty have embraced it as an effective tool for learning.

The problem is that A.I. is often being used as more than a tool. It has become a life vest for many students to summarize readings, conduct calculations, or translate French homework — and without it, they would drown. These habits stop students from engaging with ideas, learning from their mistakes and exercising creative and analytic processes to produce real results.

The consequences for misusing A.I. do not end with academic and mental indolence. It creates unfair advantages, penalizing those who refrain from these applications. Students have experiences receiving lower grades on essays than their peers who used ChatGPT, punished for doing their own work. Perfection from a robot is preferred to human mistakes. There is also a socioeconomic factor that must be considered: Chat Plus costs $20 per month, and the unlimited Chat Pro costs $200 per month. This could potentially lead to barriers to access, creating a further distinction between college students along socioeconomic lines.

As artificial intelligence has become a prevalent facet of daily life, it is unfortunately becoming less stigmatized. People are more open with using ChatGPT and other A.I. models, especially in public settings such as the dining halls, libraries and even in class. Widespread moral barriers and shame surrounding ChatGPT have begun to dissolve. This rings especially true with younger students at Middlebury, who learned about A.I. in highschool during the Covid-19 pandemic and never looked back.

As we've written previously, technology in the classroom is often a distraction, not a learning supplement, and generative A.I. is no exception. Gone are the days of daydreaming idly when bored in class — now, ChatGPT can ensure students never have a moment alone with themselves or can truly engage in their coursework.

A.I. has also intruded into our personal lives as it has transformed into a ubiquitous part of social life. Chat GPT has become more than just a robot: We all see it thanking and encouraging us from time to time, but for some it has become a friend or therapist. People have turned to asking A.I. for advice about dating or friendships. Turning to computers instead of other human beings is a seriously alarming sign of social deterioration that feels straight out of a dystopian movie. If this trend continues, we will lose a fundamental aspect of what makes us human beings.

There are potential solutions to counteract A.I.'s encroachment on the academic process. One obvious proposal is moving back to hand-written, proctored tests. Blue Book exams should not be relics of the past. This forces students to display their own, authentic work on the spot. Other small changes such as switching from discussion posts to active in-class discussions or limiting laptop usage in class can dismantle A.I.'s impact on education.

It is also important to note that each professor has personal preferences regarding A.I. Some faculty encourage students to take advantage of its capabilities, whereas others are strongly against the generative tool. Although it would be difficult to implement a schoolwide policy, there could be a more comprehensive effort to standardize A.I. practices such as dedicated sections on syllabi that teach students how to use the application in an ethical way. There also needs to be an increased awareness of Middlebury's unlimited resources such as the Center for Teaching, Learning and Research (CTLR). Our tuition money funds these programs for a reason. If people search for assistance in college-provided materials, they might feel less compelled to turn to ChatGPT for quick answers. This can work to reverse the current trajectory and motivate human interaction.

At the end of the day, our education is a privilege. When we use shortcuts, we only cheat ourselves. There needs to be greater encouragement to seek out challenges. It is not fulfilling to type in a question and have a computer generate something artificial and hollowed out. Self-enrichment is the byproduct of solving problems, knocking down barriers and creating something that is a testament to one's abilities.

There needs to be a recommitment to intellectual curiosity and academic rigor on campus. A.I. may be capable of earning you a Middlebury degree, but it can't replace your Middlebury education.

Regalia and resolve: Holding space for the sacred at commencement

THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS / RYAN MCELROY

Faculty have recently led a campaign to boycott the Commencement processional in response to the announcement of budget cuts to

Op-Ed

Jonathan Isham *is a Professor of Economics and Environmental Studies.*

The Middlebury Commencement is in the realm of the sacred, in what sociologist Émile Durkheim called "the ritual sense of the word. It has … transcendental majesty." What are its sacred elements? The processional, during which faculty and other luminaries enter to the applause of seniors; the land acknowledgement and opening prayer; the commencement address (e.g., speaker Isabel Wilkerson's inspiring call in 2018 for "radical empathy"); the singing of the Alma Mater, with its paean to the "sunset glowing o'er the mountains, snowy peaks and winding ways"; the recessional, during which the seniors — now Middlebury graduates — exit to the applause of the faculty and the others. It all adds up to a timeless, transcendent ritual.

Our ongoing budget conflict, by contrast, is in the realm of the profane, the day-to-day. To say so does not diminish the urgency of this moment. This spring, many faculty and staff are outraged by the administration's announcement of pending budget cuts, as expressed in the recent sense of the Middlebury Faculty motion, which stated "We demand that Middlebury's trustees and administrators rescind the recently announced compensation cuts and enrollment increase," and in the May 8 "Walkout to Defend Middlebury." Yet these resolute actions remain in the realm of the profane, where I believe this conflict should reside and, in time, be transformed.

On Commencement 2025, I hope that the profane will not extinguish the sacred; I hope that faculty colleagues will join the ceremony in full regalia, thereby honoring our students and their families.

The bonus? Joy flows from the sacred. The joy of giving high-fives to graduating advisees, taking in the celebratory antics of proud multi-generational families, and shouting huzzahs to newly tenured colleagues as they receive their own Gamaliel Painter cane (OK, that's more goofy than sacred). Joy is in turn a tonic for outrage, even for anger: in the words of philosopher Martha Nussbaum, it can lay the groundwork for our community to transition from anger and "to turn forward to constructive work and hope."

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LORDE'S DREAMY NEW SINGLE "WHAT WAS THAT" MARKS AN ORDINARY AND VULNERABLE RETURN

By ZIYING JIAN
Contributing Writer

Four years after her last major release, "Solar Power," Grammy award-winning artist Lorde has reemerged with "What Was That," the lead single from her upcoming fourth album "Virgin," which is set to drop on June 27. The single carries all the hallmarks of classic Lorde — her signature husky vocals layered over an electropop and synth-pop soundscape, driven by crisp percussion and introspective lyrics.

The song offers a glimpse into her personal evolution while capturing the dreamlike haze of post-heartbreak relationships. With this release, Lorde continues to peel back the layers of Hollywood artifice, embracing raw vulnerability and reestablishing a deep, honest connection with her fans.

More than just the release of a new single, her return is tapping into the cultural momentum of the "girl's girl" era — an ethos of female solidarity, vulnerability and mutual recognition spearheaded by Charli XCX's "Brat." On April 12, Lorde took to the Coachella Main Stage as Charli's surprise guest during a performance of "Girl, so confusing." Their appearance together rejected spectacle in favor of stripped-down authenticity, with the duo commanding the stage through their raw presence and magnetic chemistry rather than flashy visuals or choreography.

Lorde, who was dressed in a simple full gray outfit, reminded me that what keeps me drawn to her isn't merely her lyrical depth, but her incredible talent to infuse her emotions into live performances. In the video, she stands on stage with unforgiving conviction and a confidence that her voice will deliver the true immensity of her prose.

On April 22, two days before the release of "What Was That", Lorde debuted the single in New York City's Washington Square Park, standing on a wooden platform in the center of the park. She had teased her impromptu appearance at 7 p.m. earlier that day, but had to follow up with an Instagram story later that read, "I am truly Amazed by how you showed up !!! But they're telling me you gotta disperse. I'm so sorry." Her surprise arrival finally occurred at 9 p.m., when she finally launched into her new song.

As a native New Yorker, missing this spontaneous gathering felt like skipping out on one of the city's most meaningful cultural moments lately. But more than that, watching the pop-up performance blow up on social media helped me reconnect with what music means to me. Music isn't meant to just top global charts or become the next viral TikTok sound — it's about sharing something for regular people to relate to, struggle with, dance to and simply experience on an ordinary Tuesday night.

This impromptu performance — no security, no promotions, no ticket sales—was a quiet but powerful reminder that she still sees herself as a part of the crowd. There was no spectacle, just an artist choosing proximity over pedestal, collapsing the distance between performer and listener. It's this same commitment to emotional transparency that animates her new single, a track that feels less like a statement and more like a gesture: intimate, searching and unmistakably human.

"What Was That" begins by disarming the listener, inviting them to experience the intimacy of struggle. Lorde has never hidden her struggles with self-image and disordered eating, take her verses in "Girl, so confusing" for example: , "Cause for the last couple years / I've been at war in my body / I tried to starve myself thinner / And then I gained all the weight back." The opening verse of the song doesn't shy away from these portrayals either, and, instead, vividly creates the image for listeners of a place where Lorde "Cover[s] up all the mirrors" and will "Make a meal I won't eat."

Lorde's signature evocative and descriptive lyricism is on full display in this track. As she steps into the street, she sings, "Alone in a sea / It comes over me." Nostalgia washes over the lyrics. Paired with the driving percussion and her breathless delivery (spilling the line in one quick exhale) it creates a sense of urgency, like she's racing to hold onto the memory before the dream slips away.

Lorde frequently taps into dream logic throughout her discographies, and "What Was That" is certainly no exception. The use of dream spaces infuses a deliberately hazy atmosphere and a sense of liminality, a state that has seemingly become part of her natural artist dispositions. The lyric "Now we wake up from a dream, what was that?" serves as a reality check, punctuating the track with a haunting sense of emptiness. All the described events were only a dream, and the self-referential moment within the lyrics lands devastatingly. But the confusion can only linger briefly as pop beats continue to roll through the lyrics.

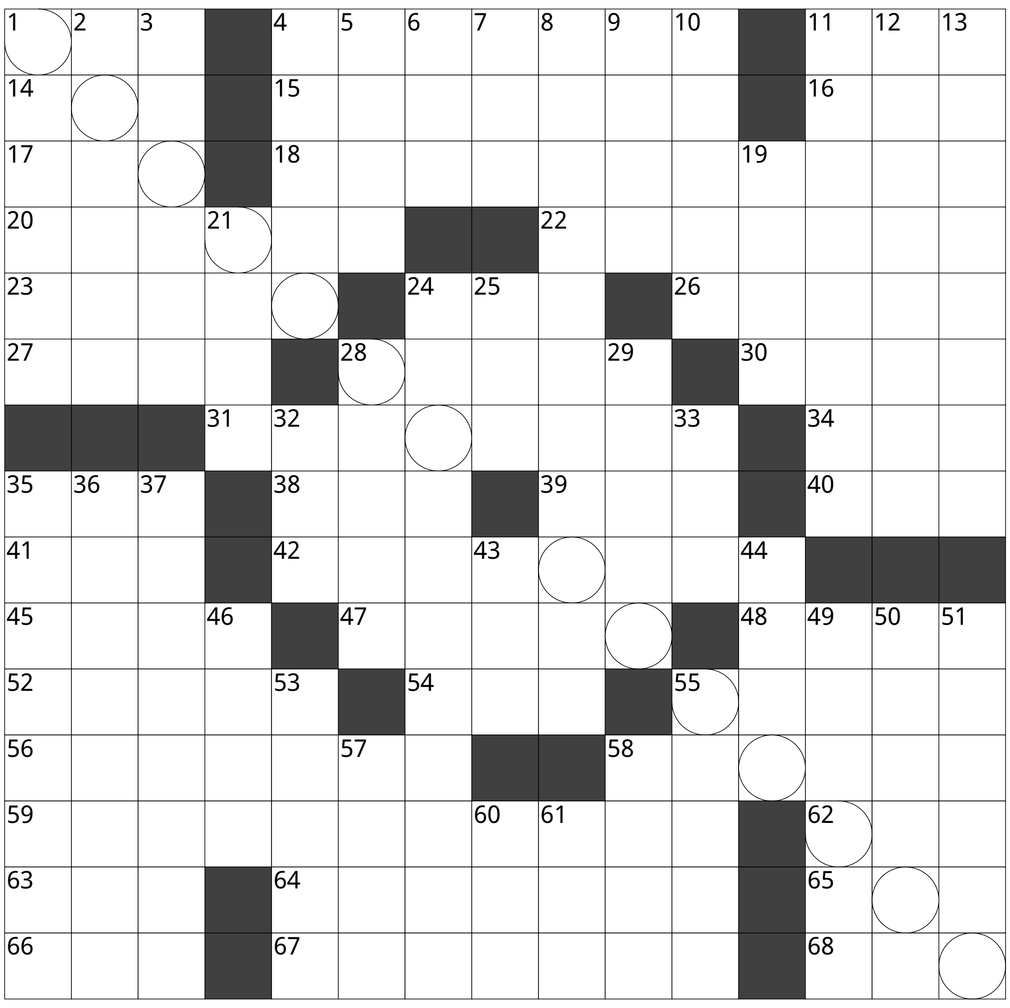
COURTESY PHOTO /LORDE

Critical reception to the track has been decidedly mixed. Paolo Ragusa of "Consequence" notes, "While it's not the most adventurous new offering from the singer, it does teem with maturity and wisdom." It's a fair assessment. "What Was That" locks into a polished, synth-forward groove, punctuated by crisp snares that give it a sense of direction. But for all its composure, it ultimately lacks the singular sonic identity Lorde has proven capable of in past work, most notably the rich, emotionally charged textures of "Melodrama." This is Lorde in control, but perhaps a little too much so.

Still, the track remains unmistakably Lorde; it is steeped in angst, sadness and a raw emotional charge. With its release came an update to her website, where she shared a note tracing the song's origins to a turbulent period in 2023: "Every meal a battle. Flashbacks and waves. Feeling grief's vortex and letting it take me. Opening my mouth and recording what fell out." This update is a stark, unfiltered glimpse into the emotional backdrop of the single. Heartbreak, as Lorde presents it, is both disorienting and transformative — and she doesn't just narrate that journey, she invites us into its depths.

One Last Ride

Josh Harkins



ACROSS

1 Mo. that ends on its 28th day
4 Like some early-purchased concert tickets
11 Masks and other items used in the last pandemic
14 Trout's team on MLB scoreboards
15 Country with Mogadishu as its capital
16 Narrow inlet
17 Bruins legend whose final game came in 1979
18 Feature of many a comedy and hopefully of this semester, certainly for this crossword constructor
20 Bringing up the back
22 Performance, such as 12-Down, that often ends in an ensemble number
23 "Riverdale" airer
24 How Cleopatra met the end
26 One could come in steak and butter varieties
27 Part of una casa
28 Island whose immigration office closed in 1954
30 Fair hiring org.
31 Baseball headgear change-up at the end of the game?
34 Mexican Mrs.
35 Kitten's cry
38 Sporty VW
39 "Just so you know"
40 President Pro ___
41 With dermis, the last layer of skin
42 Sums (to)
45 NYC commuter line
47 Unfamiliar with
48 Dry
52 "Take ___ breath"
54 Rule, for short
55 Slangy event suffix
56 Hazelnut spread
58 Time for curls?
59 Celebrations that signal the end for seniors
62 Like Shostakovich's Symphony No. 2
63 "The Raven" monogram
64 Continent ranked last by area
65 The last line of Keats' "___ on a Grecian Urn" is "Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know
66 Rocket that could replace the Saturn V in taking astronauts to the moon
67 Take the witness stand
68 Australian airport code

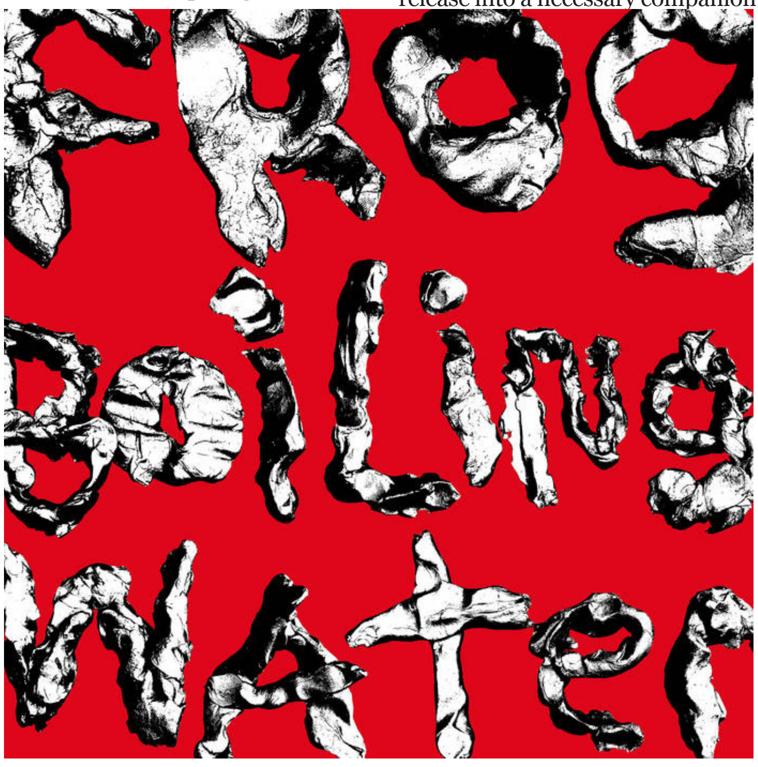
DOWN

1 Sodas with ice cream
2 Singer and actress Kitt, who originally recorded "Santa Baby"
3 Item that Mario throws at the titular enemy in Donkey Kong, 4 are needed on the last level
4 "Balderdash!"
5 Lion's sound
6 Napoleon III was the last one of France, for abbr.
7 Empty
8 Symbol originally stolen from Antwerp in 1920 and not returned until 2000 in Sydney
9 In ___ of
10 Danish in Danish
11 Most costly
12 22-Across whose final number is "Oh joy, oh rapture unforeseen"
13 Online way to watch majestic birds
19 Eat in style
21 Tesla or Rivian, for short
24 Shares such sweet sorrows, say
25 Crafty, as a fox
28 "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" singer John
29 Dost speak
32 FBI or CIA employee
33 More, in Italian
35 Mixtures
36 Labor reliever
37 Bugs, that could end a presidency
43 Shock's partner, under the last Bush president
44 Chicken ___
46 Bassoon, e.g.
49 Devices regulated by the Federal Communications Commission
50 Informal greeting said by President Jackson?
51 Versatile couch
53 Stone fruit hybrid
55 Musée ___, home of Van Gogh's self-portrait
57 Add poison to a drink, a last drink perhaps…
58 "It's not ___, it's a when"
60 Ending with lar- or commissar-
61 Demon of Japanese folklore

DOOMSDAY MACHINE GLITCH: A LOOK BACK ON "FROG IN BOILING WATER"

By OSCAR de SWAAN ARONS
Contributing Writer

I sat. To say that this night was momentous was a disservice to the magnitude I felt it held. My brother sat, then our friend James sat. All of us lounged on the L-shaped couch in my living room, a perfect middle ground between the two speakers and amplifier that make up our home surround sound system. We had spent the previous five years anticipating this album's release, and the previous 18 hours anticipating the first listen. Different generations will claim their own "voice," the singer or band who best emulates the revolution that is adolescence. For the three of us on that couch, that voice was Zachary Cole Smith and DIIV.



COURTESY PHOTO/DIIV
The cover from DIIV's album "Frogs In Boiling Water."

So, as we sat there listening to "Frog In Boiling Water" ("Frog"), DIIV's fourth studio album, deep emotions swelled. A wall of sound, followed by a wall of silence. I could leave it at that. Album of the year. Flowers. However, 2025 has done more than contextualize this album: the past year has brought essential life to the piece, turning it from a long-awaited release into a necessary companion and a document of collective disillusionment that somehow arrived right on time.

DIIV are no strangers to apocalyptic gospel. Their debut LP "Oshin" became a coveted staple of early 2010s Brooklyn dreamcore, and since then the band's sound has matured into sour and malaise-laden reflections. 2019's "Deceiver" embraced this transition with open arms, directing a gritty, shoegaze heavy scope inward, and lamenting on the band members' personal struggles in the difficult years prior. "Frog" flips the scope outwards.

There are many albums that masterfully weave different subjects and focuses into their tracklists, and then there are albums that focus on one thing and one thing only. "Frog" is the latter. It consists of 10 songs affixed completely to a feeling: the frustration one feels trying to navigate a failed system.

In line with the band's independent release of the album, five singles were released early, an astonishing half of the final tracklist. The first song on the album, "In Amber," was thankfully not one of them. Introducing the trend of simple, sludgy, best-when-played-as-loud-as-possible hooks on the album, "In Amber" builds intensity you can feel deep in your gut, while Smith mourns the sense of being fossilized in the "doomsday machine glitch." It sets the tone for the rest of the record: stuck in time, stuck in motion, burning slowly while trying not to notice the smoke. Smith ends the song in repetition — "I want to disappear" — an unadorned plea for escape that can't help but grab your attention.

The album's title is a metaphor worn thin by repetition, yet in DIIV's hands, it becomes prophetic. A frog doesn't notice the water heating until it's too late — sound familiar? We're so numb to it: algorithms, war and ecological catastrophe turned daily weather. Even on tracks like "Everyone Out," a respite from the blanketed guitars that mark the majority of the tracklist, the rage is palpable. It's the soundtrack of the exit we wish we could find. The lyrics are minimal, often mantra-like, but, as is typical with DIIV, the instruments bear the psychic weight. You don't need elaborate poetry to capture the feeling of being cooked alive. Just say it. Mean it. Loop it until it hurts.

And yet, there's beauty here too. DIIV have always been melodists, even at their noisiest. On "Reflected," a brief glimmer of something like transcendence breaks through. It's not hope, exactly. Maybe more like a longing for a world that doesn't require resignation as a coping mechanism. The melodies are drowned, but never dead.

What makes "Frog" so affecting is its timing. As I look back at the past year, subjects I might have laughed at nervously are no longer funny. The heat has turned up. "Frog" doesn't offer solutions; it doesn't need to. It's not an escape, but a mirror.

In that mirror, I've seen myself more clearly than I expected. Maybe you will too. The album is like a checkpoint for me: a marker in the molasses of modern life.

The roll out of this LP began with the band publicizing an early cyberspace site bearing resemblance to a radical 4chan mom's pinterest board. Endless scrolling revealed conspiracies shodilly explained through post-internet art, and at the bottom of the page, in the middle of a nine-minute ambient recording, lay "Soul-net", track nine.

"Soul-net" is the purest synthesization of dreamlike unease, an unfolding of a hypothetical narrator's journey down the Prison Planet Theory pipeline, a conspiracy that DIIV's lead guitarist, Andrew Bailey, lost a friend to. DIIV's pointed stab at irony hits the nail on the head, a slow burn with a finale that screams ego death. "I love my pain," Smith declares at the culmination, a heavy proclamation that makes us question whether there's even another option.

That's the brilliance of "Frog": it doesn't lie to you. It doesn't distract. It confronts you with the truth in a way that makes beauty out of decay and somehow still insists on feeling everything. Even the numbness. Even the pain.

There may not be a grand shift with "Frog." As is, the album hasn't started a revolution. It has, however, added a finely crafted drop to the bucket, the bucket that one day just might overflow. The development of DIIV's discography has been long-winded and adroitly curated, but be careful not to minimize it to helpless pessimism. After all, it wasn't pessimism that killed the "Frog," it was the boiling f*cking water.

A ROOM THAT SHRINKS: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TOLL OF "THE WALLS"

By YOUYOU ZHANG
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO /CLINTON BRANDHAGEN
Ryan Ulen '26 and Urian Vasquez '25 in "The Walls" this past weekend.

Two walls, a chair and a bed tucked into the Seeler Studio Theatre in the Mahaney Arts Center introduced audience members to the suffocating world of "The Walls" this past weekend. The play, directed by Professor of Theatre and Department Chair Cláudio Medeiros, ran from May 1–3 and offered a transformative experience, balancing laughter with moments of deep reflection.

The play was written in 1963 by Argentinian playwright Griselda Gambaro just before a period of mounting political unrest that culminated in the 1966 coup and the rise of General Juan Carlos Onganía's civil-military dictatorship. Onganía's authoritarian regime was characterized by the brutal "Process of National Reorganization" (1976–1983), during which the military carried out systematic state terrorism, leading to the disappearance of an estimated 30,000 citizens. Many have interpreted "The Walls" as a chilling foreshadowing of Argentina's future dictatorships — a world where people are confined by both visible and invisible walls, reflecting the psychological and political struggles of a generation.

The play features a deceptively simple storyline, structured around a clear power dynamic between three characters: the Functionary (Molly Snow '26), the Usher (Urian Vasquez '25) and the Young Man (Ryan Ulen '26). Taken from the countryside by "the tall one and the small one," the Young Man is confined to a room that increasingly compresses his sense of reality. The Functionary and the Usher take turns manipulating him until the Young Man collapses within the very walls that contain him. The audience shares his fear and confusion as they accompany the Young Man through this mental journey.

Though the play was written against the backdrop of Argentinian political unrest, its message

is universal and increasingly relevant today, which inspired Medieros to choose it for the annual spring play.

"When I chose the play last year, there were things in it that felt very current — gaslighting, manipulation of truth, and the theatricality of politics. Those were the themes I felt would resonate with audiences," Medeiros said. "The characters are all universal. They could be from any country, any time — and they certainly can be from our present."

The characters are nameless and defined by labels that reinforce a universal tension between youth and authority. This abstraction, Medeiros explained, opens the door to broader interpretations that reflect each viewer's different realities.

The Young Man is a vivid example; he works in an office, occasionally argues with his landlady and treasures a silver watch inherited from his late father. He is an ordinary person, relatable in both his routines and his vulnerabilities.

"I think the Young Man is like a young person — like our students, but also anybody who complies with authority out of a desire to be good and do the right thing," Medeiros explained.

Another prominent character, the Usher, reflects social dynamics embedded in the narrative.

"The Usher is like a little sidekick of the functionary. He has a similar ability to gaslight people. He sometimes shows small complaints towards the functionary, too. Nonetheless, he obeys her. His authority over the Young Man — granted by the Functionary — allows him to feel superior and extract a sense of power and personal gain from the relationship," Stage Manager Ivy Tan '28 said.

The sense of oppression in "The Walls" is conveyed not only through the characters' interactions, but also through the intentional set design. In a significant change during intermission, the stage shrank from 18 by 18 feet to 14 by 14 feet — a thoughtful choice by Set Designer Qinyi Hua '25 that mirrored the psychological shrinking of the Young Man's sense of autonomy and individuality.

"The walls restrict people's physical movement. But more importantly, they also represent a psychological barrier that restrains the mind and the ability to think," Tan said.

This notion of "the wall" also extends to the audience.

"it's a very intimate play. You realize that the audience becomes one of the walls that continues to change the narrative of the play," audience member Rach Peck '25 said.

The production depicts heavy themes through a veil of dark humor, both highlighting and obscuring the Young Man's suffering. When he discovers that the Functionary — who presents herself as "the father of the people" — has stolen his silver watch, the Usher responds with a twisted grin: "A father gives you a watch, another takes it away." Jokes like this recur throughout the play, undercutting moments of despair with unsettling irony.

"I don't think I should be laughing, because it's just hilarious that I'm so uncomfortable. And — oh — did it say in the play that you laugh when you're scared? So it definitely was more of that. I was laughing because I was uncomfortable," Peck said about the play's paradoxical experience.

Medeiros embraced this reaction as essential to the play's effect; he believes that, by engaging with the humor, audiences are better positioned to view the story with a critical eye.

"It's a dark comedy," Medeiros explained. "It takes a certain experience in the theater to understand that laughter is part of the power of the play — and it's a part of the reaction the playwright wants. Laughter is a form of recognition. It gives you distance, and by giving you distance, it allows you to see it better for what it is."

Ultimately, the play's ending transforms laughter into quiet devastation. The Young Man sits at the center of the room, cradling a fragile porcelain doll, still waiting for freedom in misery.

"It portrays the development of self-censorship, where, at the end of the play, the Young Man is left in the room with the door opened. But rather than leaving, he listens to the Usher to wait for the news of his freedom," Tan said.

The Young Man struggles in confusion within the walls. In the end, he gives in to the authority. But the cycle doesn't end there — there's another room, and perhaps thousands, even millions more "young men," facing the same challenge. And every one of them has the same question: What do we do?

Medeiros offers a simple answer, but one that takes a lifetime to put into practice.

"If we do not stand up for what we believe is right and just, the walls could fall in on us," he said.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE LOOKS TO NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER LOSS AT NESCACS

By RYAN McELROY
Editor in Chief

All good things must come to an end — even for Middlebury women's lacrosse.

The Panthers had been on an unprecedented 67-game win streak until a loss last Saturday to fifth-seeded Wesleyan University in the NESCAC semifinals at home. Now, having secured a bid to the NCAA round on Monday, the team is still in the race for what could be their fourth straight national championship.

The spring 2025 season has been a capstone for many players on the team who have built one of Middlebury Athletics' most successful programs in recent memory. Multiple players have broken decades-old records this year, while the team has squeezed out several close victories – including a 16–15 game on April 16 against their national rival Tufts University, who was NCAA runner-up last year.

"Our Tufts game on Senior Day was definitely a highlight of the season so far. I think a lot of things didn't go the way we wanted to this past weekend, but we're really excited for what's to come," said Hope Shue '25, co-captain of the team.

Fellow captain Grace Mumford '25 agreed that the Tufts game was a great victory, adding that it showed how women's lacrosse is capable of pulling out a win when facing difficult opponents.

"My highlight was definitely Tufts, rallying and gaining our confidence back and working together to really learn from that moment. It was definitely our best game this season in terms of how we played," Mumford said.

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Women's lacrosse lost to Wesleyan on Saturday in the semifinals of the NESCAC Championships.

That ability to bounce back will be especially important as Middlebury looks toward the upcoming NCAA tournament that will make or break its championship dreams following the surprise loss to Wesleyan — the team's first defeat since 2022.

Last weekend's game got off to a messy start before anyone took the field: April showers have only brought more May showers this year, leaving Peter Kohn Field a veritable slip-'n-slide by the time the Panthers and Cardinals began to duke it out in the semifinal.

Just 40 seconds into the game, Caroline Adams '26 put the first point on the board with a strong opening volley, followed by goals from Hope Shue '25 and Skyler Lach '26 that left Middlebury ahead 4–3 after the first quarter. However, Wesleyan surged in the second quarter, scoring four goals in a row and forcing Middlebury to scramble to respond. Adams and Anna Spehr '25 answered Wesleyan's volleys to narrow the deficit to 7–6 at the half.

In the game's second act, the Cardinals soared and never surrendered the lead, despite valiant efforts from goalie Elizabeth Savage '27 and smartly placed shots from offensive players Kate Motley '27 and Caroline Messer '26.

"We missed some key opportunities, had some unforced turnovers and did not do as well in the draw as we normally are used to doing," Shue explained. "I still think there was a lot to be proud of in the game. I think people stepped up in really important ways — there were great plays from our defense."

Reflecting on the game, Mumford added that the experience will be valuable as they move on to compete against some of the best schools in the nation next week.

"We haven't been in this situation in a long time in which every mistake matters that costs us because we've had such large margins," Mumford said. "We're still competitive and we still have drives, but we just have to value the ball a little bit more."

Despite Saturday's loss, the past several games have also marked individual milestones for several members of the women's team. Co-captain Kylie Wilson '25 set a new school record for most caused turnovers, racking up three such plays against Wesleyan and bringing her career total to 112. Last month, NESCAC Offensive Player of the Year Shue set a new record for career goals, toppling the previous score set over 25 years ago; in a game against Williams College, Adams broke the 2018 record for career draw controls.

The Panthers clearly have the roster and expertise to win another national championship, but they will have to hit the road over the next three weeks to earn that title.

"I think now it's going to be important to hone in on what our identity is and what our strong suit is going to be. I think Saturday was a great test run, I think we're going to use it as fuel," Wilson said.

Before heading to her first post-Wesleyan practice on Monday, Mumford agreed that this loss would only strengthen their drive to win a national title.

"I think it's important, reminding everybody that it takes hard work to win, and we've played well so far but it's just going to take a lot more hard work to get us where we want to go," Mumford added.

Although a loss at home hit hard, no one should count Middlebury out just yet. The team has a bye for the first round of the NCAA, but on May 11 at 1 p.m. the Panthers will be back on the prowl, facing the winner of Ithaca College versus State University of New York at Oswego.

All three co-captains said they are itching to get back on the field and show the country — and themselves — that Middlebury has what it takes to win.

"Only the seniors on our team have ever lost a game before, so I think it was really important to have that experience," Shue said. "It's important to know we are not invincible and we really need to work very hard to become the team that we want to be to win another national championship."

Middlebury is still an odds-on favorite to reach Salem, Va., where the final four teams will battle for the national conference crown on May 23–25. It will be a fight to the finish, not a coronation, but one thing is certain: the Panthers will leave it all on the field in pursuit of NCAA glory.

CHASING GREATNESS: MIDDLEBURY FIELD HOCKEY'S SUCCESS ON SCREEN

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Managing Editor

As most people familiar with Middlebury athletics know, the field hockey team has seen sensational success in recent years, having captured eight NCAA championships in the past nine years and an astonishing seven consecutive titles. But few know the captivating story beyond the scoreboard: What does their time off the field together look like when cheering crowds have dispersed? What is the secret to their success?

These are the questions that Gina Driscoll '25, a Film and Media Culture major and a member of the women's lacrosse team, set out to answer. She received permission to start shooting the field hockey team at the beginning of their fall 2023 season, when they had already won five of their consecutive national titles. Over an intensive 45 days of filming, more than 40 taped interviews with players, coaches and staff members, and 250 hours of footage from the 2023 season — which ultimately yielded two more NCAA trophies — Driscoll is deep into her ambition to create a two-hour documentary that promises to unveil the soul of the team.

In a packed Dana Auditorium on Friday evening, members of the team, coaches, staff members and crowds of friends and supporters gathered to watch a 20-minute preview of Driscoll's project, titled "Chasing Greatness." She managed to parr the larger story of the team's accomplishments in 2023 down to a sneak peak of what is to come in the full documentary.

Before endeavoring on this project, Driscoll had little experience with documentary filmmaking, only having produced highlight reels of athletes. Inspired by the Hardknock sports documentaries on HBO, she was determined to recreate something similar and turned to the internet to teach herself how to level up skills to tackle a bigger project.

"I remember thinking, I think we've got a story here with the Midd field hockey team, so I just thought, why don't I just pick up a camera and shoot that a little bit," she said in her remarks before the screening.

Professor of Writing and Rhetoric Hector Vila, Driscoll's advisor for the project, remarked to the audience on the several months of hard, detail-obsessive work she poured into the project. He emphasized that this type of film production is usually done by a full production team, not by a single college student-athlete.

"What's really impressive as Gina jumped into something that she never did before, what comes through is … Gina's talent and Gina's ability to actually see," Vila said. "You can hold a camera or you can take a shot or you can write some things down, but the most important thing is how well you can see things, and Gina has a magnificent eye."

The preview kicks off with historic footage of the team from 1998, then jumps to their next win in 2015 and then to 2017, the year that launched their seven-year streak. The 2023 footage begins in August, with Head Coach Katharine DeLorenzo welcoming the first year students at the time.

"You're already here," DeLorenzo said, addressing the seven new team members. "Don't try to prove anything to us. Just give us yourself. We want you just the way you are, but we want the best of you."

The montage footage of the team's early days shows them receiving their crisp new uniforms, meeting for strategic classroom sessions, bonding with their teammates, stretching on the field with the Green Mountains in the backdrop, conducting warm-ups and drills and gym training sessions. With more of DeLorenzo's motivational advice narrating these scenes, they are backlit by the electrifying knowledge of the historic season about to unfold.

COURTESY PHOTO / GINA DRISCOLL

Gina Driscoll '25 had a screening for her documentary on the Middlebury women's field hockey team's journey to win their sixth (now seventh) consecutive NCAA DIII title.

Then, the game reels begin: With players scooping and driving ball after ball into the other team's net with satisfying "clunks" and the immediate blow of the referee's whistle, the Panthers seamlessly won game after game in the lead up to the NCAA Championships. The documentary then shifts and chronicles their experience traveling 424 miles to Messiah University in Mechanicsburg, Pa. to compete in the national championships — one they hadn't necessarily anticipated making.

Scenes from the games leading up to the Panthers scoring their NCAA championship win against beautiful fall foliage feel invigorating, but also reveal the anticipation the team was in as they approached their victory. Viewers know what the result will be, but the Panthers in these clips were still in limbo. For every face deep in concentration or frustration, there were countless recordings of their smiles and celebrations. Holding up their trophy, the team jumps up and down in slow motion, capturing the ecstasy of hard work converted to success.

"I've always had this phrase, since the first year I was coaching, that you can't ever complain about something that you brag about," DeLorenzo said. "If we're going to be able to take a 14 hour bus ride together, stay in a hotel together, figure out somebody else's field and be able to celebrate those gifts and victories, then we cannot say that there's anything about that that we wish didn't happen."

Footage of the team dancing together in the bus on their long trip and laughing for minutes on end in their hotel lobby demonstrated how their close bond pushes them through weekends with high stakes. Driscoll captured small moments that may otherwise go unnoticed, such as the team members braiding each others' hair while waiting for the bus on the sidewalk.

"To see a team that was so close knit being able to accomplish something so big while having so much fun was surprising honestly," Driscoll said. "You look at a team that has won five back to back championships, you think, you know, like these guys they have to have a lot of pressure on their backs and they'd better be pretty stressed about it, but in interviewing every single one of them, none of them are thinking about the next championship, they're thinking about the next practice, the next game."

The final version of "Chasing Greatness" will include personal stories from hours of revealing interviews to reflect the true experience of Middlebury field hockey — what it truly means to have an undefeated season.

HISTORIC DOUBLE VICTORY: MIDDLEBURY TENNIS TEAMS CAPTURE NESCAC CHAMPIONSHIPS

By TING CUI
Senior Sports Editor

2025 NESCAC CHAMPIONS
WOMEN'S TENNIS

COURTESY PHOTO / STOCKTON PHOTO

Middlebury women's tennis made program history by winning its first-ever NESCAC title, marking the first time both the men's and women's teams have claimed NESCAC championships in the same season.

In a rain-soaked weekend that will go down in Middlebury athletics history, the women's tennis team finally broke through with their first-ever NESCAC Championship, defeating four-time defending champion Wesleyan University 4–1 on their home turf. An hour later, the men's team completed an improbable championship run of their own at home, adding a 12th NESCAC title to their collection.

For the women, the victory marks a watershed moment after coming tantalizingly close in years past — losing in the semifinals last season and falling in the finals for three consecutive years before that.

"Part of us had that underdog mentality," Co-captain Sahana Raman '25 said. "But we played well against them during the regular season, so we were like, 'Okay, we have nothing to lose — we can beat them because we did before.'"

The women had a 4–0 sweep of Hamilton College in Friday's quarterfinals, a 4–1 victory over Amherst College in Saturday's semifinals and a historic win against Wesleyan on Sunday. Due to rain, the final was moved indoors, creating a unique scenario for the moment of triumph. The team was split across two separate banks of courts, leaving players unable to see what was happening on the other side.

For Co-captain Nina Farhat '25, who ultimately clinched the championship point, this meant a moment of delayed jubilation.

"It was a little janky," she recalled. "We were split on courts, and I ended up being the player that clinched the match overall. When I won the point, I actually had no idea that I clinched the match because I didn't know what was happening at all on the other side."

What followed was a moment of pure confusion turned elation as teammates one-by-one emerged from behind a curtain and the other courts to celebrate.

"Nathalie was on the bench next to me with two other teammates watching," Farhat said. "She knew I was getting close to winning the championship point, and she texted them not to come onto the court because she knew — and she was totally right — if all of them just came onto my court at once, I would have realized I clinched the match and totally could have choked."

The celebration that followed captured four years of pent-up desire.

For the senior class that includes Farhat, Raman, Claudia Miller '25, and Nathalie van der Reis '25, this victory represents the culmination of a four-year journey marked by near-misses and coaching changes.

After Rachel Kahan left the program before the 2021 season, Rob Barr — who was assistant coach under Kahan — served as interim coach for the 2021–22 season, the seniors' freshman year. The women's team finally found their rhythm this year under first-year head coach Olivia Leavitt. At just 28, Leavitt is the youngest women's tennis coach in the NESCAC, but she brought exactly what the program needed: stability and a shared vision that aligned with the team's values.

"Every single year our team has felt entirely different," Farhat said. "We've had a lot of head coaching changes, so it was kind of hard for us to almost find this cultural team identity. We've had so many ups and downs, so many changes, so many transitions. It's kind of hard for us to walk in, just focus on the tennis, and just play our best."

Farhat and Raman both noted that the addition of three energetic freshmen — Gusty Beveridge '28, Elizabeth Doak '28 and Elsie Van Wieren '28 — alongside their new coach has made a huge difference.

"These three freshmen came in with a ton of energy, so excited to compete," Farhat said. "We finally had some normalcy, especially with coaching, and then my whole class of us four girls as captains as well."

In a remarkable coincidence, Leavitt's final collegiate match as a player at Brandeis University was a loss to Wesleyan on the very same courts where Middlebury clinched their championship.

"It was a really beautiful full circle that we were able to get the NESCAC title under her leadership, but also we beat the school that took her out in her final team match at these exact courts," Farhat noted.

The tournament also featured another full-circle moment between Raman and Farhat, who grew up playing doubles together as juniors.

"We've known each other since we were 12 and actually played doubles together when we were younger for a few years," Raman said. "She's literally one of my best friends. We live together. She knows when I'm super nervous and how to hype me up."

While the women were making history at Wesleyan, the men's team was crafting their own remarkable story at home. Entering as the fifth seed after an up-and-down regular season, they stunned the conference by defeating three teams — Williams, Tufts and Bowdoin — that had beaten them earlier in the year.

"We didn't have super high expectations," Co-captain Noah Laber '25 said. "We didn't really have any hard-set goals on winning anything this year in a way that we had before. We just sort of wanted to do our best and enjoy the season."

This relaxed approach paid off as the Panthers dispatched Williams 4–0 in the quarterfinals before pulling off their biggest upset in Saturday's semifinals, knocking off top-seeded and third-ranked Tufts 4–3.

A critical win came against Tufts in the semifinals by senior captain Neel Epstein '25.

"Neel was playing someone who historically has had a pretty good record against him," Laber said. "He ended up pulling off a pretty big comeback and winning a lot of really important points. I think without him winning that match, I don't think we would have won in the semi."

The momentum carried into Sunday's final against third-seeded Bowdoin, a team that has developed into Middlebury's fiercest rival. The intensity was palpable inside Nelson, where the sound of cheers echoed off the walls.

At one point, after winning a point, Laber silenced heckling Bowdoin players with a finger to his lips.

"Bowdoin is really not my favorite team," he admitted. "We don't really get along with a lot of their players. We've played them in a lot of big matches in the NCAA tournament as well. The rowdiness is sort of what makes it fun, but at some point, when they're shouting between serves or making absurd comments, it's a little annoying."

Despite playing through a wrist injury, Julian "Juju" Wu '26 clinched the championship with a 6–4, 6–3 win at #2 singles. The injury forced Wu to adapt his game style and rely heavily on slice backhands rather than his usual two-handed technique.

Unlike Farhat's experience, Wu was fully aware of the significance of his match point, as his team lined up on the side of the court watching his final points. "It was awesome to have that moment, to kind of clinch NESCACs," Wu said. "But you know, it's not just my moment, it's the full team's moment. We all worked hard this spring and throughout the season. It just ended up falling on my racket at the end there."

The championships held special meaning for families who traveled from across the country. Laber's father flew in from California for the weekend, not knowing if it would be his son's final collegiate matches. From the Chicago suburbs, the Kondamuri family made the journey to witness their son Nikky Kondamuri '27 help secure the crucial doubles point in the final.

"They all fought so hard," said Shaun Kondamuri, Nikki's father. "What's so cool is we lost to all three teams in season. And then they beat Williams, they beat Tufts, they beat Bowdoin. It's really a big win — they really dug deep and won."

Both teams are now preparing for the NCAA Tournament. The women will host regional rounds this weekend at Middlebury, having received a first-round bye. They'll play their opening match on Saturday in the second round, and if they advance, they'll compete in Sunday's regional final with a chance to reach the national quarterfinals in California.

The men's team will travel to Johns Hopkins for their regional matches.

"We got a pretty decent draw in regionals," Laber said. "Johns Hopkins is definitely tough, but some other teams, like Amherst, are having to go back and play Tufts again, which is definitely harder. I think we feel pretty good about our chance to make California."

As both teams ride the momentum of their historic NESCAC championship weekend, they've certainly won over fans eager to see how far their season will go. For Middlebury students still on campus, this weekend presents a perfect opportunity to come out and support the women's team as they continue their historic season.

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